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The Nation. December 22, 1979 $1

EDITORIAL

PRESIDENT SANTA CLAUS

Bosses Tweed, Hague and Curley would have to tip their hats to President Carter. The brazen way this most pious of Presidents is ladling out public funds to help his own renomination campaign in a state-by-state sequence based solely on primary dates is quite dazzling.

He sent his Transportation Secretary to Chicago the other day to dish out $24.8 million in "discretionary" highway funds. The ceremony was held in the office of a "loyal" Congressman because Mayor Jane Byrne had the nerve to announce herself for Senator Edward Kennedy. The troughs of Florida and Iowa are already brimming and the other primary states are preparing to be slopped with their deserts, just or not. It is worth noting that the Chicago largess alone is $7.8 million more than a Presidential candidate can spend for the entire primary campaign. Onward and upward with "reform"! Hail to incumbency!

One of Ronald Reagan's better lines in his 1976 race against President Ford was that the bands at Ford rallies never knew whether to play "Hail to the Chief" or "Santa Claus Is Coming to Town." Ford was in the same Federal handout racket, but Carter The Innocent is harder-nosed about it.

Can Americans take comfort from the fact that Carter has been restrained in his conduct of foreign policy, venting his aggressions at home on political enemies? Perhaps, but it's a peculiar trade-off and one that might not last. For now, the Carter Presidency is more aldermanic than imperial. What he is doing goes far beyond the norms of our political traditions. Bribery is the real name of this game. It also violates the law prohibiting the use of a Federal official's authority to help nominate or elect a President. It is time to dust off that old statute and honor it in the observance. Why Not a Prosecution?

WIRETAPPING: AN EXCHANGE
G. Robert Blakey
Herman Schwartz

KENNEDY AND THE LEFT
Norman Birnbaum

THE BLUNT CASE
Christopher Hitchens

POP PEDANTRY
Jim Quinn

'ON MEN AND MANHOOD'
Jean Bethke Elshtain

PROVINCIAL LONDON
Richard Gilman

THE ASSASSINATION CIRCUS

CONSPIRACIES UNLIMITED

FRANK DONNER

"Sometimes these cogitations still amaze/The troubled midnight and the noon's repose."
—T.S. Eliot

The twenty-seven-volume investigative record and 686-page report on the Kennedy and King assassinations by the House Select Committee on Assassinations released earlier this year may make history—but for the wrong reasons. The lengthy probe (September 1976 to December 1978) concluded after spending $5.4 million that President John F. Kennedy was "probably assassinated as a result of a conspiracy," and that "on the basis of circumstantial evidence . . . there is a likelihood that" Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated also "as a result of a conspiracy." Even these qualified conclusions rest on rickety foundations.

Like the Warren Commission before it, the committee's investigation has confirmed an underlying bias. From the start, the Warren Commission tilted toward a lone-assassin conclusion for a variety of reasons: its more or less explicit mandate to eliminate the unsettling impact of conspiracy speculations on political stability; its need (a priority of Chief Justice Earl Warren) to counteract the nativist Communist conspiracy mania which burgeoned in the 1960s, and (a White House concern) the desire to eliminate embarrassment in foreign relations.

The bias of the Warren Commission was reflected in its failure to exhaust investigative leads and thereby prove that no conspiracy existed. In the turbulent decade that followed its investigations, when the traumas of the Vietnam War, Watergate and the lawlessness of the intelligence community amounted to what has been called a

(Continued on Page 654)

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AN EXCHANGE.

THE CASE FOR WIRETAPS

Ithaca, N.Y.

I see that my good friend Herman Schwartz ["The Wiretap Decade," *The Nation*, Sept. 8] is up to his old tricks again. (Herm and I have been arguing about the permissible range, if any, of electronic surveillance in a free society since we met in 1966.) I see also that nothing that happened in the last decade, since I drafted and he fought the 1968 wiretap statute, has changed his opinions—or his techniques of mis-persuasion.

First, he misleads his readers by suggesting that the Congress passed Title III because of Robert Kennedy's death. (He usually adds Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., too.) In so saying, he ignores the recommendations of such bodies as President Johnson's Crime Commission and the Judicial Conference of the United States, then headed by Chief Justice Earl Warren, both of which supported the 1968 bill. He also slights the Senate, which turned back an effort to strike Title III from the 1968 act by a vote of 68 to 12, *before* those fateful days in April and June. Supporting the bill was a bipartisan, bi-ideological coalition, including Senators like Bayh, Brooke, Ervin, Muskie and Percy. The House may have been stunned, but the Senate, where I was working at the time, was as deliberative as I have ever seen it, and I have been watching it now for almost twenty years.

Second, he suggests the verdict on the actual operation of Title III is "not very good." He mentions the National Wiretap Study Commission, on which I served, but he does not tell you that the commission majority "vigorously reaffirmed the finding and statements of policy" of the 1968 act. At least he could have told his readers that he was "selling" the minority view.

Third, he leaves his reader with the impression that little has been accomplished *with the statute*. As the minority did, he read the data supplied by the Department of Justice on major organized-crime prosecutions as exhaustive, when they were only illustrative. In addition, he fails to tell his readers about what they illustrated, including the indictments and convictions of major Cosa Nostra leaders previously immune —apparently—to the rule of law.

If more has not been accomplished in the organized-crime field, it is not the fault of the statute. Studies done here at the Cornell Institute on Organized Crime have shown that there are fewer than 400 full-time prosecutors working exclusively on organized-crime cases. If each member of La Cosa Nostra (estimated membership, 5,000) had one lawyer, their lawyers would outnumber ours by more than ten to one. Even if the odds were more in society's favor, it is apparent that the failure to do more is more sensibly attributed to failure of personnel than it is to the potential of the statute. In addition, if priorities are wrong—too many gambling cases and not enough high-level drug dealers—why not change the priorities rather than the law?

Underlying much of what Herm says is the proposition that surveillance is ineffective as a matter of fact. I respect his opinion—and others'—to the degree that their judgment is that however effective surveillance is, the cost in loss of privacy is not worth paying. That is a value conflict on which reasonable persons can differ. But Herm's point is that surveillance does not work, and that is nonsense! The record of the commission is overwhelming on that point. The testimony of judges, law-enforcement officials *and defense lawyers* was eloquent. One member of the Watergate jury aptly put it, "It's hard to argue with . . . tapes. It's too bad we couldn't have tapes at every trial."

Fourth, Herm leaves his readers with the impression that few, if any, illegal surveillance cases have been prosecuted, without noting the case of the century—Watergate. The White House would have been right. The Watergate break-in would have been a "third-rate burglary" without Title III. As it was, it turned out to be a Federal felony; the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and not the D.C. police, investigated it, and it ultimately cost a number of people their positions of power. Not a bad result for a statute that liberals opposed in 1968!

Finally, there is one additional, but ironic, point that should be made to the basically liberal audience of *The Nation*. My recent service as chief counsel of the House assassination committee let me review not only how wiretapping was obscenely abused in its use against Dr. King but how it was *not* employed, by Presidential and Attorney General's directive, in the investigation of his assassination, as it could have been, since Title III became law shortly after Dr. King's tragic death. (Herm is right, too, when he notes that some House members specifically voted for Title III hoping it would aid in the search for his killer.) It is my considered judgment after reviewing the 1968 investigation and reinvestigating the matter in 1978 that the imaginative use of surveillance in 1968 could have brought James Earl Ray's still free co-conspirators to book. If I'm right, the price we paid for not using surveillance in 1968 was surely too high, too high a price to ask any free society to suffer.

Let me close by quoting from the opinion of Justice Kenneth Keating of the New York Court of Appeals, *Kaiser v. New York*, 21 N.Y. 2nd 86, 96, *affirmed*, 394 U.S. 280 (1968), affirming an extortion wiretap conviction:

> Yet much as we might like, we cannot ignore the realities of life. We cannot ignore the rise of organized criminal activity and "families" who promise to provide the true "big brothers" of 1984. As the facts of this case reveal, some intrusions under the most severely regulated and restricted conditions are necessary, lest the only security we enjoy is that from government intrusions.

G. Robert Blakey, Director
Cornell Institute on
Organized Crime

HERMAN SCHWARTZ REPLIES

Washington

I was somewhat startled at being accused of "old tricks," "mis-persuasion" and "misleading" by a self-styled "good friend." (What would a not-so-"good friend" say?) When I read the letter, I was even more puzzled—Mr. Blakey really doesn't dispute any of my main points, which are:

(*1*) When Title III was being pushed, its supporters assured us that it would be used sparingly, only for serious offenses, and would work wonders. Mr. Blakey doesn't deny this, for he was one of the assurers.

(*2*) Hundreds of thousands of people in millions of conversations have

(Continued on Page 647)

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CONTENTS.

Volume 229, No. 21

COVER
Editorial: President Santa Claus
The Assassination Circus:
Conspiracies Unlimited — *Frank Donner*

AN EXCHANGE
642

EDITORIALS
643 Out of the Past — *Fred J. Cook*
645 Watch This Space
645 The B-1's Back — *Fred Kaplan*
646 *Variations* — *Calvin Trillin*
Drawings by Lou Myers

ARTICLES
648 Kennedy and the Left:
How Much of the Way
With E.M.K.? — *Norman Birnbaum*
651 The Blunt Case:
Keeping It in the Royal Family — *Christopher Hitchens*

BOOKS & THE ARTS
661 Mitchell: Less Than Words Can Say — *Jim Quinn*
664 Kriegel: On Men and Manhood — *Jean Bethke Elshtain*
666 The Ghost of England Past — *Richard Gilman*
667 Music — *David Hamilton*
668 Films — *Robert Hatch*
669 Indigenous Music — *Nat Hentoff*

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EDITORIALS.

Out of the Past

When television newscasts show us jumbled piles of financial records abandoned by the Shah of Iran when he hastily abdicated his Peacock Throne, and Iranians claim that they show the Shah filched at least $1 billion—perhaps as much as $20 billion—from the nation during his brutal regime, I am carried back more than fourteen years to the spring of 1965, when I researched and wrote for *The Nation* an article entitled "The Billion-Dollar Mystery." It charged essentially what the Government of the Ayatollah Khomeini now claims—that the Shah was a crook who squirreled away fantastic sums in secret Swiss bank accounts.

The April 12, 1965, issue of *The Nation* had barely hit the streets when the late Senator John McClellan, who had seen an advance proof, abandoned an inquiry by the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the Committee on Government Operations, both of which he headed. For nearly two years he had been hearing secret testimony that purported to show exactly what *The Nation* charged—that millions of dollars of American foreign aid money sent to Iran to build hospitals, improve roadways and construct dams had been diverted into a secret Pahlevi Foundation bank account in the Union Bank of Switzerland.

Indeed, McClellan had been so impressed by the testimony that, in his official report to the Senate on February 8, 1965, he announced that he intended to launch a full-scale probe into apparently documented charges that pointed to "gross corruption and misuse of funds in excess of $100 million in connection with the administration of United States aid to Iran." He did, in due course, send investigators to Iran to find out what had happened to American-funded projects. They found that no such projects existed; the American millions allotted for them had simply disappeared. Yet when *The Nation* tried to lift the lid on this smothered scandal, Senator McClellan roared "fraud."

The Nation article had its genesis in a suit filed in New York Supreme Court by a flamboyant Iranian prince known as the Khaibar Khan. A chief of the Bakhtiari tribe in southern Iran, the Khaibar Khan had once been in the Shah's favor, but had had an almost fatal falling-out with his Imperial Majesty and had been given sanctuary in the United States. His suit was based upon a claim that the Shah and his family owed him $2.5 million for an aborted world sports complex K.K. was to have headed in Iran. None of this would have been a cause for national agitation except

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for the fact that K.K. claimed he had had spies inside the imperial palace in Teheran. His spies, he said, had photostatted and forwarded to him records showing the financial maneuverings of the Shah. In support of this contention, he submitted into evidence in the New York court case two sets of astounding documents. One set purported to show the transfer of millions of dollars from the Shah's national treasury to a secret bank account of the Shah's personally owned Pahlevi Foundation in the Union Bank of Switzerland. The second batch of photostats indicated that millions of dollars had been transferred from this foundation account to the Shah's sister, brother and other Pahlevi relatives—and also to some of the most prominent and influential Americans on the public scene at the time, including David Rockefeller.* The Khaibar Khan's attorney, Richard H. Wels, had had the Khan's documents examined by Federal Bureau of Investigation agents. Although the F.B.I. could give no definitive verdict owing to the distortion of photostats, the agents told Wels that, in their opinion, the documents appeared legitimate. Wels then took the Khaibar Khan to Washington, where he testified extensively before the McClellan committee in May and June 1963.

Several striking revelations emerged during these sessions. Senator McClellan, understandably dubious at first, asked the U.S. Treasury for a list of American aid payments to Iran. This list was apparently furnished not just to McClellan's committee but to the Iranian Embassy in Washington. This was a mistake because the Khaibar Khan apparently had agents within the embassy as well as in Teheran, and when he next appeared before the Senate committee, he produced a photostat of the Treasury record. Wels charged that the McClellan committee had leaked information to the Iranian Embassy, and Senator McClellan retorted angrily that no leak had come from his committee.

A second shocker came when Treasury's records of payments to Iran were compared with the Khaibar Khan's original photostat of transfers of funds from Iran to the Pahlevi Foundation. The comparison showed that, in instance after instance, the payment of American millions to Iran was followed shortly afterward by the diversion of many millions into the Geneva bank account of the Pahlevi Foundation.

Confronted with a potential major international scandal, McClellan began asking questions. During May 1963, he got emphatic denials from several of the prominent Americans that they had ever received the large sums the Khaibar Khan's records indicated had been paid to them out of the Pahlevi Foundation account. Iranian and Swiss banking sources were equally emphatic. On August 30, 1963, McClellan received a sweeping denial from Jahangir Amuzegar, Ambassador at Large and chief of the Iranian Economic Mission in Washington. Amuzegar wrote that the Pahlevi Foundation and its predecessor organization both "categorically deny having any knowledge of the account in question." The Pahlevi organizations asserted that "never in their institutional life did they have nor do they now have *any account in any foreign bank* (Union Bank of Switzerland included)" and so "any check drawn on any foreign bank and attributed to them must be faked and forged."

On February 14, 1964, McClellan heard from the Union Bank of Switzerland. The bank wrote that it had obtained permission from "the Director of the Pahlevi Foundation to permit us to speak in its behalf. . . ." The bank then contended that the type and format on the accounting sheets the Khaibar Khan had produced were not like those used by the bank. And it added: "In addition, neither our Head Office, our Geneva branch nor any other Branch of this bank has at this time, nor at any time in the past, ever had an account in the name of the Pahlevi Foundation of Iran."

And so we are presented with another mystery. For more than a year after receiving this supposedly definitive repudiation of the Khaibar Khan's story, Senator McClellan gave every indication that he expected to call public hearings to find out what had happened to American aid funds sent to Iran. After all, those funds had vanished, and the projects for which they had been allocated had not been built.

Then I incautiously wrote and *The Nation* had the temerity to publish "The Billion-Dollar Mystery." The instant that happened, Senator McClellan erupted. His turnabout was a mystery to me then; it is a mystery to me still. What is clear now, however, is how utterly ridiculous were some of those official repudiations of the Khaibar Khan's evidence. The Shah *never* used any banks outside of Iran? Come off it. The Union Bank of Switzerland *never* had any dealings with the Pahlevi Foundation? The records now being unveiled in Iran suggest that it did. They also establish that the Pahlevi Foundation (whatever its apparent charitable purposes) served as a conduit through which Iranian national funds were transferred to the Shah's private use—and the conduit through which princely seven-figure amounts were channeled to various members of the Shah's family (see "The Pahlavi Foundation" by Robert Graham, *The Nation*, December 9, 1978). As for the Shah's never using foreign banks, *The New York Times* reported from Teheran on December 5, 1979: "Among the banks that have received multimillion-dollar transfers are the Chase Manhattan Bank, Citibank and the Union Bank of Switzerland." The available evidence suggests that these banking relationships were of years-long duration. It would seem to indicate, too, that the principal difference in the money-transfer gambit between the time I wrote in 1965 and a decade later is simply this: then the Shah was skimming off millions of dollars from American foreign aid money; in more recent years, he was diverting hundreds of millions, perhaps billions, from Iran's bloated oil company revenues.

And that, except for one postscript, ends the tale of "The Billion-Dollar Mystery." After Khomeini came to power, Iranians, unbeknown to me, translated my old 1965 *Nation* article into Persian.** It ran serially in Teheran newspapers,

*The prominence of the names listed in the Pahlevi Foundation bank account as having received payments helps to explain why the story was regarded with skepticism. But since either arbitrary accounting procedures or C.I.A. laundering could explain such lists, the mystery remains.

**Last spring a number of people connected to the story were reportedly interviewed by F.B.I. agents worried that Pahlevi Foundation documents discovered in Teheran by the revolutionaries might now be used to blackmail Americans formerly on the Shah's secret payroll.

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was published in paperback form and distributed all over Iran. It represented, I guess, Chapter I in the Iranian public indictment of the Shah, and it made *The Nation* as well known in Iran as *The New York Times* is in New York. A development for which, I must confess, I am not sorry.

FRED J. COOK

Fred J. Cook is an award-winning investigative journalist and regular contributor to The Nation.

Watch This Space

"Curiouser and curiouser" are the only words to describe Henry Kissinger's reactions to Sigmund Diamond's story in our issue of November 10 linking Kissinger to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Professor Diamond's story, as readers may recall, was documented with a photocopy of an F.B.I. memorandum describing Kissinger's 1953 call to the F.B.I. and his opening of mail sent to participants in Harvard's Summer International Seminar, which he was conducting. Initially, Kissinger told Ken Auletta of *The New York Daily News*, "I said then it was not true"—an odd explanation, given that no one knew about the memorandum outside the F.B.I. until Professor Diamond obtained it this year through a Freedom of Information Act request. A week later, Kissinger's aide William Hyland issued a protestation by Kissinger that he didn't remember calling the F.B.I. and, further, that the Bureau couldn't have released such a document under the F.O.I.A. since the act does not permit release of names to third parties.

Comes now Susan C. Faludi writing in *The Harvard Crimson*, November 16, that Harvard's Summer International Seminar received substantial grants during the early 1950s from private foundations that were later identified as conduits for Central Intelligence Agency funds.

Was the seminar indeed financed by the C.I.A., and was Kissinger in touch with the C.I.A. as well as the F.B.I.? Is Kissinger implying that Diamond's document, a part of which was reproduced in *The Nation*, was a forgery? Or is he simply invoking the F.O.I.A. rule (which indeed may have been inadvertently violated by the F.B.I.) to cover up his own complicity? To put the latter question to rest we have filed our own F.O.I.A. request with the F.B.I. for the same memorandum. Watch this space.

The B-1's Back

The B-1 bomber, long presumed dead, is in fact alive and, if not well, at least recovering quite nicely.

After a long and well-coordinated anti-B-1 campaign, and following exhaustive Defense Department analyses, President Carter announced on June 30, 1977, that "the B-1, a very expensive weapons system, basically conceived in the absence of the cruise missile factor, is not necessary." Air-launched cruise missiles (ALCMs), he decided, could do the job far more effectively and at lower cost. Cruise missiles are small, pilotless, computer-guided, air-breathing, nuclear-warhead-delivering weapons that can be launched from B-52 bombers, commercial 747 jets or a number of other already existing airplanes. Since they have a range of more than 1,500 miles, a plane can "stand off" and fire cruise missiles without ever having to penetrate potentially dangerous Soviet air space. Further, cruise missiles are a pinpoint on a radar screen; a B-52 appears 1,000 times larger, and a B-1 shows up 100 times larger. Cruise missiles could also be programmed to zigzag, if detected, far more deftly than a huge airplane.

The cruise missile, in short, seemed the perfect device to nullify the massive and extraordinarily expensive air defense network that the Russians have constructed over the past decade, to which the B-1 would be far more vulnerable. However, the Air Force and its friends on Capitol Hill have done their best to subvert the President's decision.

First, the Air Force never accepted the notion that stand-off cruise missiles are better than penetrating bombers. The Air Force research-and-development budget for the coming fiscal year includes a total of nearly $100 million for such items as "New Manned Bomber," "Bomber Penetration Analysis (B-1)," "Strategic Bomber Enhancement," "Bomber Defensive Systems"—all of which would be unnecessary unless the Air Force planned to send a bomber in to penetrate and drop bombs. Second, the Air Force is determined that, if it is forced to convert to a cruise missile force, it will be the B-1 that carries those missiles. Through the 1980s, ALCMs will be loaded in 151 B-52G bombers. By the 1990s, however, the B-52s will be supplemented and eventually supplanted by a cruise missile-carrier aircraft, now in the design stage. And the leading candidate in the race to become this aircraft is the B-1—now traveling incognito as the "strategic weapons launcher," or SWL.

The last Congress gave the Air Force $30 million to hold a competitive fly-off between the SWL and a commercial transport aircraft, with the winner to be selected as the cruise missile-carrier aircraft. The Air Force has now decided that the SWL's contender will be the newly proposed C-X airplane. The C-X is a new cargo transporter that the Defense Department wants to airlift very large, heavy supplies in the event of a war in Europe or, especially, the Middle East. It is just an idea on paper at this point, whereas four B-1s have already been built. The C-X will probably also be too large to fill the requirements of an agile cruise missile carrier. In short, the competition is rigged in favor of the B-1, alias SWL.

After this game has been played out, it is a safe bet that the Air Force will push the SWL as a penetrating bomber as well. Indeed, in selling the airplane, the Air Force is already emphasizing that, unlike other alternatives, the SWL has the "penetration option." And so, against the decisive ruling of the President, the judgment of the Secretary of Defense, the votes of the Congress and a massive mobilization of public

(Continued on Page 648)

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VARIATIONS

CALVIN TRILLIN

WASHINGTON, Sept. 19—Those of us who complained about the first of the Presidential campaign debates having been dominated by talk of Senator Kennedy's alleged philandering and Governor Reagan's alleged age were, of course, disappointed last night when, at the very beginning of the second debate, a perfectly legitimate request that Senator Kennedy outline his views on foreign affairs caused the Senator to flush and then stamp off the stage in anger, leaving Governor Reagan to shout, "Don't think I can't match him French bimbo for French bimbo!"

The only significant new issue brought up last night—an acknowledgment that Senator Kennedy's tortured syntax is causing some voters uneasiness about the level of his intelligence—was raised almost accidentally when, in answer to a pointed question about separation of powers, the Senator named two branches of Government and then paused, obviously unable to think of the third. Governor Reagan was well within his rights to use the incident later in the debate ("Is that the sort of thing he's planning to say to Brezhnev on the hot line—'It's right here on the tip of my tongue?' "), but it did seem unsportsmanlike to break the awkward silence of Senator Kennedy's long pause by shouting "Who's going to take *this* quiz for you, Teddy?" The Governor's remark was made to appear prescient rather than rude, though, when Senator Kennedy managed to recall the judiciary only after reading a note delivered from the audience by Arthur Schlesinger Jr.

Ironically, Senator Kennedy's lapse of memory came at a time when Governor Reagan had raised some doubts about his own grasp of world events by beginning a list of foreign heads of state who are older than he is with the names of Francisco Franco, Syngman Rhee, Bernard Baruch and Connie Mack. Certainly there is no support in the scientific community for Governor Reagan's contention that if Abraham Lincoln's life had not been cut short by an assassin's bullet he would now be 160 years old.

Opinion here is mixed as to whether the Governor was wise in trying to impugn the integrity of Arthur Schlesinger Jr., who has emerged as one of Senator Kennedy's most trusted advisers, by quoting from Mr. Schlesinger's Harvard diary, which the Reagan forces apparently obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. Governor Reagan obviously has the right to call attention to Mr. Schlesinger's remarks—made in the August 1979 issue of *McCall's*—that Chappaquiddick would make Senator Kennedy a better President because it resulted in an effort at self-redemption that "may be for Teddy Kennedy what polio was for F.D.R." It is less clear that Mr. Schlesinger actually said, as the Reagan forces claim, that "Teddy Kennedy's Chappaquiddick and George Washington's Valley Forge were essentially the same sort of experience, except for taking place at different seasons of the year." In any case, revealing a passage from a youthful diary seems to have no purpose beyond embarrassing Mr. Schlesinger and titillating the public. The passage that Governor Reagan chose to quote is as follows: "Dear Diary, Today I asked those cool Kennedy boys again if I could play in their touch football game on the quad and they said again that I was a wonk and a weenie and a wimp and a grind and walked like a duck. I told them that someday I would be a famous historian and if they ever let me play with them then I would write *whatever they wanted me to write.*"

Mr. Schlesinger is not the only friend who may have caused Senator Kennedy some embarrassment last night. Rafferty O'Leary, the Boston political writer, is still being investigated on the allegation that in the first debate the Kennedy forces provided him with a question that he misread ("Governor Reagan, is it true that you dye your nose?"). There was surprise and some consternation among Washington observers last night when Mr. O'Leary showed up again as one of the questioners for the debate, particularly considering the fact that he continues to work weekends at Senator Kennedy's McLean, Virginia, estate as an assistant groom. Suspicions were only intensified when Mr. O'Leary fell asleep and began snoring loudly during what was admittedly a rather lengthy answer by Governor Reagan to a question on national goals. Accusations that Mr. O'Leary only pretended to be asleep will certainly be difficult to prove considering the fact that the debate moderator, Thatcher Baxter Hatcher of the Fair Campaign Practices Committee, dozed off during the same speech. Assurances by Mr. Hatcher of Mr. O'Leary's probity and objectivity, though, would certainly carry more weight if Mr. Hatcher himself did not continue to work at the Senator's McLean, Virginia, estate as an assistant groom.

The question Washington observers are asking today is what we have to look forward to in the remaining sixteen debates. Certainly it can be considered progress that Governor Reagan did not insist on debating on horseback last night, although that might be explained by the injury his horse suffered in the first debate. There is reason to be grateful that the questioners last night seemed less interested in Chappaquiddick, asking Senator Kennedy only nineteen questions on that subject. But will Governor Reagan continue to remove his shirt when questions of age come up ("Take a look at the delts and lats of a man half my age!")? Will Senator Kennedy—who, as an attorney, certainly knows better—again accuse the Governor of such obviously trumped-up violations of the law as "overt aging on camera"? Prospects that more substantial issues might be discussed in the third debate were certainly not enhanced by today's announcement that the two candidates, both having moved toward the center of the political spectrum during these early weeks of campaigning, have stipulated agreement on economic and foreign and defense and social welfare policy, leaving strong differences between them only on the matters of sex, age and a variety of embarrassing moments.

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(Continued From Page 642)

been eavesdropped upon under Title III, at great cost, primarily in minor gambling and drug cases.

(3) Judicial supervision is poor, especially on the state level where 85 percent of wiretapping now occurs.

(4) The results of wiretapping have been so disappointing that Federal and New York City prosecutors, its most enthusiastic initial proponents, have used it less and less in recent years, even for gambling. It is of virtually no value for serious crimes like murder, kidnapping, theft and the like, and has failed to weaken organized crime.

(5) Illegal wiretapping has not noticeably declined.

(6) There have been outrageous abuses in national-security surveillance.

None of these conclusions are seriously challenged. So what is troubling Mr. Blakey? First, he says I "misled" my readers by "suggesting" that Congress passed Title III because of Robert Kennedy's death, ignoring the earlier Senate vote. But of course I didn't do that—the first lines of my article referred to "Robert Kennedy's assassination, black riots and Vietnam dissension," the latter two, of course, preceding the Senate action. As to Dr. King's murder, I have never mentioned it in this context. Kennedy's assassination was indeed crucial, but only in the House. Wiretap opponents had hoped Representative Emanuel Celler would be able to bottle up the legislation in the House Judiciary Committee. Kennedy's assassination prevented that. As to the general tenor of the times, and who voted for the legislation containing the wiretap law and why, Richard Harris of the *New Yorker* reported a few months later that "all those who voted against it, many of those who voted for it and most of those who didn't vote at all [believed] that the bill was a piece of demagoguery, devised out of malevolence, and enacted in hysteria."

I am next chided for mentioning the Wiretap Commission but not discussing the commission majority view praising the statute. But then I would have had to use scarce space to point out (as I have done elsewhere) that the commission was stacked by Richard Nixon with wiretap supporters and dominated by Senators John McClellan and Roman Hruska, Mr. Blakey himself and others. I therefore discussed neither the majority nor the minority conclusions but simply reported facts and findings developed by the commission staff and issued as part of the commission report.

Then Mr. Blakey says that I read Department of Justice data as "exhaustive" rather than "illustrative." I don't know what he's talking about. I didn't "read" Justice data at all, and nowhere mentioned any in my article. I relied on data gathered and issued annually by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts, on Congressional hearings and on comprehensive and wide-ranging studies for the Wiretap Commission (that Mr. Blakey himself helped shape) which formed the basis for such Wiretap Commission staff conclusions as: "What is remarkable in fact is the relative disuse of electronic surveillance for other crimes [besides gambling and drugs] and the apparent lack of success when tried."

And as to the "major Cosa Nostra leaders" convicted because of Title III, neither Mr. Blakey nor anyone else has ever documented more than a few isolated cases. And I have never said there are *no* successes. As I've often written, obviously there are some, if only through serendipity. But on an overall assessment of costs and benefits, wiretapping has failed.

Ultimately, Mr. Blakey agrees that little has been accomplished against organized crime by the use of electronic surveillance, and attributes it to inadequate and misplaced priorities and resources. But the Federal Government alone has spent hundreds of millions of dollars in the fight against organized crime for wiretapping and for eighteen special strike forces—approximately $80 million a year according to a 1977 General Accounting Office report which severely criticized the Government for wasting the money. (Incidentally, 400 lawyers plus investigators against 5,000 Cosa Nostra members, many of whom are very minor figures, doesn't sound like a bad ratio at all—it's far better than most Government lawyers face in securities, antitrust and criminal conspiracy cases.) How much is enough?

As to the misplaced priorities, Mr. Blakey suggests a de-emphasis on gambling and low-level drug cases. I hope that this means he supports my suggestion that police be denied the authority to tap and bug for those crimes.

And I agree that "it is hard to argue with tapes," as the Watergate grand juror said. It's just that it's just as hard to get anything good on tapes, except in gambling, where the phone must be used. And even there, the big operators are not caught. As an experienced defense lawyer told the Wiretap Commission, if you are "a smart major bookmaker, you are not worried about the wiretap law" because you can "afford to move every week . . . and if I move every week you can't tap my telephone."

Mr. Blakey cites the Watergate prosecution as an example of a successful use of Title III to protect privacy. But surely he knows that even if Title III hadn't been enacted, Section 605 of the Communications Act of 1934 forbade all wiretapping and was available to prosecute the Watergate defendants.

Mention of Watergate brings up one thing that ought to be understood—the Watergate tapes were not Title III wiretap tapes but recordings by one party to the conversation, which is outside the wiretap law. I have never condemned this kind of recording—which is quite useful—but I think it ought to be brought under meaningful controls to prevent its misuse for political purposes.

Mr. Blakey finds things in my article that aren't there. I never "noted" that "some House members specifically voted for Title III" to help find Martin Luther King's killers, and I really don't recall whether that was the case.

Mr. Blakey closes by quoting Kenneth Keating, who probably put in more wiretap bills during his time in Congress than anyone else, some of which were so bad that even a Justice Department seeking authority to tap and bug couldn't support them. Perhaps Mr. Blakey might also recall Justice Louis Brandeis's warnings in *Olmstead* v. *United States*, the first major wiretap case:

> Experience should teach us to be most on our guard to protect liberty when the government's purposes are beneficent. . . . The greatest dangers to liberty lurk in insidious encroachments by men of zeal, well-meaning but without understanding.

Herman Schwartz

The Nation welcomes letters from readers but space limitations often prevent publication of those of more than 250 words.

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(Continued From Page 645)

opinion, the Air Force and Rockwell International (the B-1's manufacturer) will probably win the war, even after the seemingly disastrous setbacks in early skirmishes.

Some analysts argue that the B-1 is the best cruise missile carrier because of its rapid-takeoff capability, which would enable it to elude surprise attacks from Soviet submarines lingering near our shores. There is something to this argument; however, official data also reveal that enhanced versions of commercial aircraft like Lockheed's L-1011 are capable of taking off more rapidly than Air Force specifications require. Moreover, these commercial derivatives would be substantially cheaper than the B-1. Furthermore, the Russians are developing new air defense missiles that will make low-flying bombers such as the B-1 increasingly vulnerable over the next decade. With relatively inexpensive modifications, cruise missiles can remain virtually invulnerable.

Nevertheless, the B-1 will quite likely be with us again. It has already been developed; it would certainly outperform such proposed alternatives as a stretched and modified FB-111 bomber; and although, by the Air Force's admission, B-52s will be operational through the 1990s, the B-1, for what it's worth, would probably be "the best" manned penetrator. If President Carter accepts the assumption that a new manned penetrating bomber is necessary, many in Congress will certainly ask, "Why not the best?" FRED KAPLAN

Fred Kaplan, a Congressional defense analyst, has written for The Nation, The New York Times Magazine *and other publications.*

ARTICLES.

KENNEDY AND THE LEFT

How Much of the Way With E.M.K.?

NORMAN BIRNBAUM

The campaign, with its attendant imbecilities, has begun. Not the least of the outrages we have to confront is the pretense that recent American campaigns have been serious. The results, of course, have been serious and that will be no less true of the election of 1980. What vexes is the supposition that we live in a near suburb of ancient Athens—a supposition that enables many commentators to respond with pious horror when our politicians do not behave like characters from Thucydides (the alternative of Aristophanes usually escapes them). The supposition is particularly gratuitous since the commentators work for the communications industry, which has made a singularly large contribution to the trivialization of political discourse in our nation. Those who expect enlightenment from the campaign had better take advance precaution against disillusionment—emigration.

For those of us who are staying, however, the situation is not entirely bleak. There is one chance, at least, that issues may be posed and clarified. The candidacy of Senator Edward Kennedy can raise the question of what sort of society we want. The Senator is not only the heir of a familial tradition that fuses achievement, promise and sentiment. He is the leader of the only forces seeking to alter the shape and substance of mainstream politics from within. The remnants of the New Deal, Fair Deal and Great Society coalitions, joined in very imperfect union with the ideological survivors of the 1960s and their successors, the new politics and public interest groups, should see in Kennedy their Presidential candidate. Those Americans who wish for major alterations in our institutions, those who espouse a vision of our nation marked by freedom and generosity, moral spaciousness and cultural openness, must ask themselves: how much of the way with Edward M. Kennedy?

The Senator's immediate task is to connect the old Democratic politics of the black, ethnic and urban blocs with the new politics of the past fifteen years. Beyond that, he will have to do well in regions like the South, Middle West and West, make substantial inroads upon the suburbs and induce the opinion makers and technocrats to abandon the catatonic ideological slumber into which they have fallen. The Senator will have to assemble a coalition as a necessary step on the way to reassembling the nation. The Senator has been the spokesman for the left (or social democratic) elements of the Democratic Party, but they (we) should accept that he must attempt to broaden his appeal and reach. Our own weight in the electoral coalition (and in the Administration which may emerge from it) will depend less upon our quantitative strength than upon the issues we raise, the ideas we generate. Our own deal with the candidate, then, has to be a special one. Without neglecting the concrete objectives we share with other groups, we shall have to insist on a new sense of political possibility, on the search for a qualitative transformation in the way we conduct our affairs.

In the meantime, where have the Senator's instincts led him in the first weeks of the campaign? He has said that Jimmy Carter is not adequate as a President, lacks inner certainty when dealing with the public, is poorly served by an indifferent staff and misreads the requirements of a modern Presidency. The times call for something larger than an engineer's approach to our problems combined with bouts of evangelical fervor tempered by fitful recourse to a politics of patronage and spoils. But Kennedy has not followed up these initial criticisms with a coherent program. He has assailed the President's energy program in specific terms and spoken of "leadership" in very general ones. He has declared that the 1980s call for responses different from

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those of the 1960s—a good point were it not so widely used to defend the reigning stereotypes of a market economy. The Senator has also said that he favored private-sector solutions to as many economic problems as possible, without adding that there are essential problems that the private sector has been unable to solve. He has also told businessmen that his own record on deregulation exempts him from the charge that he is an enemy of business—although no one appears to have made that charge. The least that can be said is that he has not offered a large social design or vision. It is small consolation to recall that Franklin Roosevelt campaigned on a promise to balance the budget.

The Senator confronts his programmatic (or pedagogic) task in miserable circumstances. A conventional move toward the center is precluded: the center is a large vacuum. There is a large body of "centrist" opinion in the Congress, operating with an abacus of advantage, opting now for one side, now for another, and making the word "independent" a further demonstration of the degradation of our language. The fault lies not with the usual venality of politicians, nor with the apathy of the electorate (an apathy which may well be justified). It lies in some part with the party's left, with us, for our failure to make a realistic assessment of both our opportunities and our difficulties. We cannot urge Senator Kennedy to adopt a program that remains a promise and a project rather than a set of concrete proposals. The Senator may well say that he is being asked to fight a holding action, with little chance of immediate intellectual or political reinforcement from those who urge a forward strategy upon him. Certainly his Senatorial performance has been criticized on the ground that having established principled positions, he has frequently been obliged to negotiate compromises with those of different positions—who happened to command majorities.

Kennedy's Senate career has been marked by concentration on issues of immediate concern to millions of Americans: health care, the control of the health industry, the control of science and technology generally. His campaign for national health insurance has focused attention on the distortions of our national social accounts. He has struggled against the medical-industrial complex, which has sought to market everything—including life itself. Kennedy's role in the reform of the criminal code has been vigorously criticized, and I share the reservations of the critics. But the issue was not one about which large and determined popular forces were mobilized. On defense and foreign affairs, Kennedy's Senatorial record is excellent. He has supported arms control and a broad process of détente, and has been outspoken on behalf of human rights in tyrannies of every sort. Above all, he has shown a grasp of the necessity of altering national attitudes in a new epoch of global politics. His Catholicism, and in particular his special interest in Latin America, will serve him well in a period in which the political role of the Roman Catholic Church in much of the world is important.

What is of equal importance is that Kennedy has assumed the role of spokesman for those groups in American society that are systematically underrepresented in the current play of politics. There is a paradox. He has described the current Congress as the best that money could buy, and strongly supports campaign financing reform. Yet he is a legislator able to work within the system—and to cooperate with many who oppose him. The question is not whether he has been a visionary Senator in all respects. It is whether he has shown the capacity to promulgate an alternate vision of our society in concrete terms. To ask of him that he campaign as the leader of a progressive social movement that is itself notably inchoate, and that has as yet to realize much of its own potential for redefining politics, is decidedly asking too much too soon.

Next let me turn to the questions of character and personality that have so dominated the campaign debate thus far that it has been an educational disaster. For this Senator Kennedy can blame those of his advisers who urged him to make the theme of "leadership" salient. Leadership is also a matter of issues. No doubt the media bear their usual large share of the responsibility for the conversion of what should be a national debate into a happening. Perhaps the public has more acumen. *The Washington Post* has just reported, not without astonishment, that on the road the Senator is not burdened with questions about Chappaquiddick. That event, of course, does cast a long shadow across the man. His hesitant response to CBS correspondent Roger Mudd's questions as to why he wanted to be President casts another one. About Chappaquiddick, why can't we say that the reconstruction of the tragedy is not likely to prove a fruitful

DRAWINGS BY LOU MYERS

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historical exercise? The Senator has since given ample proof that, like most of us, he is capable of growth. It would be wise to judge him on his Senatorial performance, which does not seem to have been diminished by his personal troubles. As for the Mudd interview, I gather that the questions about the Presidency were filmed before Kennedy's decision to run. In any event, his refusal to submit to Dr. Mudd's psychic surgery contrasts pleasantly with the usual immodest public confessions of Presidential ambition.

The office is terrible enough; must candidates be subject to Nietzschean tests—administered by the spiritual everyman (and everywoman) who hold them to superhuman standards? A women's political leader has declared that because Kennedy is a notorious "womanizer," he is unfit to be President. The editor and the managing editor of *The New Republic* have raised the issue, in a public debate over whether or not to publish an article dealing with it. The debate's moral grandeur was only slightly diminished by the fact that the managing editor, having resigned on a matter of principle, was promptly reinstated with a raise—and by the fact that the dispute got more attention than the article would have received. In fact, the article (printed in *The Washington Monthly*) is vacuous. The women's movement, for its part, continues to call upon the Senator for help with the statutory protection of women's rights and with social policy generally. No doubt the Senator's familial life is troubled; he is not the only American in such circumstances. I suspect that much of the criticism of Kennedy as a person is cultivated by people who do not know him and who dislike his politics. Let us judge the public man by the public record. We might, at the same time, show just a bit of heart to those whom we ask to become candidates for the public sacrifice we expect of Presidents.

Are the Kennedys simply an incarnation of American myth, our own version of the House of Atreus? Few societies are without myths of some sort, and there are aspects of the Kennedy family's history that are compelling. The Kennedys, after all, have maintained a critical distance from that white Protestant elite which equates the pursuit of its own interests with a Calvinist God's mission for the entire nation. Catholic, contentious and troubled, they have never confused the appearance of propriety and the substance of humanity. Senator Kennedy seems to have the gift of relating to the rest of us. It would be absurd to depict this simply as a modern equivalent of noblesse oblige—but we may ask the family's detractors if they prefer the version of ethnic politics offered by George Bush, John Connally or the Rockefellers.

How much of the way, then, should we go with E.M.K.? I would suggest that we go a large segment of it—but with our eyes not fixed on our feet. The Senator works within the system, to be sure, but other alternatives do not dominate the horizon. Gov. Jerry Brown is credited by Francis Carney (see "The Making of a 'Flake,' " *The Nation*, December 1) with thinking that the bureaucrats and professionals are the new tyrants—and with being rather silent about the large corporations. Senator Kennedy has demonstrated his capacity to mobilize the bureaucrats and professionals on behalf of the unorganized citizenry—which seems a far more realistic program for a technological society. The logic of his positions could lead, sooner or later, to a collision with the organized political power of large-scale corporate enterprise. Whether it will do so depends not upon his leadership but upon the capacity of those who seek that conflict to provide him with a large following and specific programs.

At the moment, the left of the Democratic Party is divided. Some of its elements are exploring the possibility, yet again, of developing a third party—the Citizens Party, which appears to unite some of the consumerists and environmentalists (led by Barry Commoner) with enthusiasts for themes enunciated by groups like Common Cause. Jerry Brown has his followers. Tom Hayden, who apparently wishes to run for office on the Democratic ticket in California, does not envisage his Campaign for Economic Democracy as a separate party. There are some Democratic leaders, like Coretta King and Andrew Young (as well as industrial states' governors like Ella Grasso and unionists like Glenn Watts of the Communications Workers), who are on President Carter's side. A substantial segment of the party's left (consumerists, environmentalists, black and ethnic groups, women's groups, some local and state government officials and large unions, including the United Automobile Workers, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, and the Machinists) are in the Progressive Alliance. Indeed, the Alliance numbers some eighty organizations and seems the most likely forum for the transformation of the legacy of the New Deal, Fair Deal and Great Society coalitions into a program for our own times. I use the term *forum* advisedly. Much of the Alliance's work until now has consisted of protracted negotiations among and between the leaders of its very diverse components. Its program has just begun to be formulated. The delay has a number of causes. The U.A.W., which originally convened the Alliance, has its own preoccupations. Some of the Alliance's components (and their members) will have direct links with the Kennedy campaign.

There is, however, a more profound cause. The disparate interests represented in the Alliance will have to unite in a new compact before the coalition can proceed to proposing a new politics to the nation—or present its own program to Senator Kennedy. (The Senator did not attend the recent meeting of the Democratic Agenda, which has a large overlap with the Alliance, and the Senator's political representative to these segments of the party was, apparently, also busy elsewhere when it met.) Douglas Fraser, the auto workers' president, won unanimous assent at a recent meeting of the Alliance's Issues Commission when he said that the Alliance was most emphatically not a campaign organization for Senator Kennedy. Indeed, he added, he thought it would do well to concentrate on a long-term political program—and eschew the kind of bargaining likely to be entailed by attempts to influence the Democratic Party's 1980 platform. A Democratic President would need pressure from his left, a Republican one would require us to rethink in any case. He thought that the Alliance should take all of 1981 to

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do serious programmatic work.

We do have new ideas of politics, if in fragmentary form. What these fragments require, as a bonding agency, is an alternative vision of our national community. That vision can hardly emerge as a result of negotiations among the components of the Alliance. A new vision will have to draw upon ideas conceived not at one remove from politics but at one remove from specific interests. The conceptual difficulties of the Alliance constitute a very large rebuke to our institutions of knowledge and to our intellectuals. Their adherence to technocratic conceptions of the limits of public policy expresses a profound failure of the moral imagination. We can console ourselves with the thought that ideas unaided do not generate new modes of politics but a search for a new politics can generate new ideas.

The election of Edward Kennedy to the Presidency might give us either the last of a line of twentieth-century Presidents of a reformist sort—or someone who assists the nation to adapt to the new epoch which it has reluctantly and half-consciously entered. The very disappointments of his Presidency might catalyze the search for a politics that would transcend the limits of our currently impoverished political discourse—and of our political possibilities. It is plausible, then, to support the Senator on the ground that he might well demonstrate the "truth" his critics so joyously proclaim, that a certain kind of American reformism, resting on a maximum of bargaining and a minimum of redistribution, is indeed out of date. It does not follow, of course, that we live in the best of all possible worlds. It might follow that a good many of our citizens will begin to think that we live in one that is unnecessarily worse than it could be.

As I write, these considerations seem curiously remote—as if we were recomputing the election of 1912. The Senator's campaign is not moving either very fast or in a very promising direction. If that were not distressing enough, the Iranian crisis has immobilized everyone and everything except our very large reserves of national self-righteousness. It has given new life to the Carter candidacy. Credit where credit is due: having acquiesced, ignobly, to pressure from Messrs. Kissinger, McCloy and Rockefeller, the President has for the time being shown the courage to resist the systematic fatuity of the hawks. I cannot say for how long he will do so, or how the crisis will end. In the short run, it strengthens the most chauvinist and unreflective wing of the Democratic Party—and therewith opens the way for a deal between Carter and Senator Daniel P. Moynihan. Anything is possible, including the mutual elimination of Carter and Kennedy and a national ticket that would include Senator Moynihan and Senator Sam Nunn. The Republicans cannot be counted upon to act in their own best interest, but suppose they had an accession of intelligence, and nominated Bush instead of Reagan or Connally? Combining Eastern elite credentials with Texas money, a simulacrum of an appeal to the middle with experience of the national security state, Bush is the perfect servitor of much of our elite. The cowardice he displayed in resigning from the Council on Foreign Relations is, from their perspective, positive evidence for the kind of finesse their agents require. The Democratic Party is bitterly and deeply divided. If the division persists for ten months, a plausible Republican like Bush would have excellent chances to defeat Kennedy.

These uncertainties weigh upon the Senator in ways both viscerally and visually evident. To win the nomination and the election, he has to mobilize his natural constituency—but to do so may divide not only the party but the nation, and induce the tensions that killed his elder brothers. It is monstrous, in the circumstances, to deride him for his inner hesitation. The left of the Democratic Party, the groups represented in the Progressive Alliance, can exercise a large influence upon his campaign. Kennedy is a Presidential candidate with whom we can speak, but we will have to recognize the constraints upon him, and speak clearly by proposing policies both concrete and imaginative.

There is no reason to abandon the theme of productivity to the right (or to Jerry Brown), for example. We can advance a new idea of productivity, in opposition to the vulgar crudity of those who think all units of account are alike. We can argue that participation may constitute a source of increased productivity—a theme that may appeal to a public demonstrably critical of its present elites. We can even connect with some of the enlightened elements in the economic elite itself—by insisting that planning is a precondition of our survival in the new international economy, postponing until later a struggle for the control of the planning process.

Reason and sentiment alike, then, suggest that we support Senator Kennedy. The candidate himself will measure our contribution to his campaign in terms of our realism and imagination. We have the right to ask of him, in turn, that he refrain from thinking our support unconditional. He cannot win with us alone, but he surely cannot win without us. □

THE BLUNT CASE

Keeping It in The Royal Family

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

London

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times. It was the time of humiliation and indignity for the establishment; it was the time of the witch hunt. It was the time when the cold-war chickens came home to roost; it was also the time when homosexuals were threatened with a hounding from the civil service. It was the time when the Royal Family was made to look agreeably ridiculous; it was the time when loyalty tests were proposed for public employees. It was the time of the long-awaited exposure; it was the time of the cover-up and the muddying of the waters. The case of Sir Anthony Blunt was, in short, a very British affair indeed.

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As British as the day is long. It had everything—the Royal Family, upper-crust homosexuality, Russian agents, Cambridge coteries—all woven together in a script that Graham Greene could have envied. All it lacked was an animal angle—though the public appetite for that kind of thing had been partly assuaged earlier in the year by Jeremy Thorpe and his shot dog. Where else but in England could a fairly senior agent of the K.G.B. make a full confession and then, far from being sent to prison, actually be given a plum job at Buckingham Palace? And where else but in England would it be illegal to mention the fact even if you could discover it? Even now, Blunt is able to use the Official Secrets Act to avoid answering any searching questions in public. The description of him in print, by the editor of a national Sunday newspaper, as "that treacherous Communist poof" is still the most that the average citizen knows.

A little history is necessary here, in order to supply some context. In the mid-1960s, it was discovered that the leading figures of British intelligence, especially that section of it concerned with countering the Soviet Union, had been working for Moscow for more than two decades. They had allowed high-level Russian penetration of the Central Intelligence Agency (which has distrusted its British "cousins" ever since) and blown countless operations and agents. Not only this—but they had all safely escaped to Moscow after a tip-off. The one man actually caught, George Blake, was sentenced to life imprisonment, but the K.G.B. sprang him with almost contemptuous ease. H.A.R. (Kim) Philby, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean all got off scot-free.

Investigation showed that the three men had all been at Cambridge together, had all been accepted into military intelligence because their class backgrounds "fitted" and had (with the exception of Philby) been leading members of the homosexual demimonde that dominated Cambridge intellectual life in the 1930s. They also shared the experience of having been active and open members of the Communist Party at one time or another—something that seemed to have escaped the notice of their British employers if not their Russian ones. The public reaction to all this was, to put it mildly, one of open-mouthed disbelief.

These revelations, which helped to bring about the collapse of the Conservative Government in 1964, led to a great deal of febrile speculation. This resolved itself after a time into one misleading but simple and powerful question—who had let them get away with it? Ever since, the mystery of the "Fourth Man"—the man who had recruited them, and who had then tipped them off to flee when the net was closing, has been a recurring theme of British novels, psychodramas, cocktail party punch-ups and political journalism.

The unmasking of Blunt was typical. A senior BBC executive, Andrew Boyle, wrote a book called *The Climate of Treason* (published in the United States under the title *The Fourth Man*) which was at first greeted with yawns because it purported to name the fourth "Fourth Man" to be named in two years. Attention began to concentrate, however, when it emerged that this fourth man was still alive (the British laws on libel and official secrecy make it near-impossible to be rude about anyone rich, famous or powerful who has more than three of the five senses.)

Boyle disguised Blunt in his narrative under the nom de guerre of "Maurice"—a presumed reference to the hero of E.M. Forster's posthumous gay novel, thus focusing attention on Cambridge and what used to be known as "the queens of King's." It was left to the present author, in the *New Statesman*, to print the information that Maurice was Blunt, adding that for all that he was innocent and a harmless fellow. I was wrong there. The subsequent "naming" of Blunt in the House of Commons led to his admission that he had indeed signed up with the Soviet Union for the duration, while still a young man at Cambridge. He gave as his reason the softness of the British upper class in the face of nascent 1930s fascism. Here, though the British public hasn't been told it, is the real connection with the Royal Family.

The British upper crust ("upper crust" being once defined as "a lot of crumbs held together by dough") was indeed fatally attracted to fascism at that period. We now know, from books on Unity Mitford and others, how extensive was the salon sadism of that time, and how it postponed rearmament against Hitler. The very reason that British intelligence was so easy to join in 1940 is the one unconsciously given by Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in her statement on the affair—that it was only in that year that they began to build up a staff to take on the Germans. The admission speaks volumes—though the implications were lost on most of the Tory party.

Possibly the most important pro-Nazi elitist was the King himself—that is to say Edward VIII, who was forced to abdicate only because he couldn't keep his hands off an American divorcée. After he became the Duke of Windsor, his friendship with Hitler became notorious, and there is some evidence that the *Führer* planned to install him as regent of Britain if things had gone the other way.

Now, after the war was over, King George VI dispatched Blunt—then still a trusted British agent—to Germany to recover "possibly embarrassing correspondence" involving the Royal Family. This task he performed with commendable zeal. Thus the wheel came, as they say, full circle. The patriotic element of the ruling class sent a secret Stalinist member of the same class to clear up the dirty Nazi past of yet another member. *And it was all kept in the family for another thirty years.* (Indeed, it might not be irrelevant to point out that Blunt is the Queen's third cousin once removed.)

No wonder that, when Blunt was finally forced to confess his role in the Russian penetration of British intelligence, the Royal Family kept him on as Surveyor of the Queen's Pictures. No wonder that the political leadership of the country was kept in ignorance of the deal until it had become a *fait accompli*; impossible to undo without compromising the holy of holies herself. No wonder that Blunt was given a free pardon and a knighthood while lesser fry were sent to prison forever. No wonder the outrage and embarrassment of the establishment upon finding out that the long-looked-for "mole" had been one of them, and all along. The British

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establishment is not a pretty sight when rattled. Blunt's knighthood was stripped from him in a rare display of regal pettishness at his temerity in breaking the Eleventh Commandment, which prohibits being found out. (In the same way, Philby in Moscow fifteen years ago received a letter from Buckingham Palace revoking his membership in the Order of the British Empire—thus giving him the first belly laugh he'd had in months.)

Then the hunt really began. There were demands that all queers and subversives be vetted to make sure they held no "sensitive" jobs. Blunt's friends and colleagues started to receive ill-mannered late-night calls from people with cut-glass accents. Mr. Julian Amery, a leading Tory right-wing Member of Parliament whose brother was hanged at Nuremberg for recruiting British prisoners of war to join Hitler's army (he managed to get a dozen or so), claimed to have the names of a dozen Labor M.P.s whose loyalty was to the Russian Embassy. Pressed to give the names, he discovered that, in the words of the great British proletarian saying, "he had left his cock in his spare pair of pants."

Best of all was *The Times*, newly returned to the newsstands after a ludicrous and costly lockout. Their editorial on the subject recalled that John Maynard Keynes had been a leading light in the Cambridge of the period, and suggested that his attitude to iron economic laws such as the gold standard was determined by his rejection of what it called "conventional sexual morality." This novel idea—that sodomy is the cause of inflation—was perhaps the monetarist explanation of treason. Nobody had the temerity to remind *The Times* of its consistent record of support for appeasement in the 1930s and its editorial decision to do nothing to antagonize Hitler until after he had digested Czechoslovakia in 1938.

This confusion—of the Comintern with the Homintern as you might say—generated rather more heat than light. It was barely noticed that Blunt's own statement, which had been cleared by the Cabinet, specifically denied that he had recruited Philby, Burgess or Maclean, and admitted only to passing German intelligence material to Russia. The effect of this statement was to establish Blunt as a traitor all right (he does admit to helping the spies to escape in the 1960s), but not as the Fourth Man or the mole.

Of course, the entire idea of there being one demonic and brilliant individual responsible is absurd. It serves the paranoid elements of the left and the right—the former who believe in a corrupt and Vichy-minded establishment and the latter who see a homosexual Marxist conspiring against the nation's bodily fluids. But totems such as this are cherished, and it will take the country a long time to wean itself from a diet of John Le Carré and Ian Fleming.

One small victory was, however, gained. In the course of his researches, Boyle found the usual wall of secrecy protecting all the British sources. Insofar as his material has any factual virtue, it derives from his having taken a plane to Washington and made use of the Freedom of Information Act. It began to dawn on British editors and legislators that none of the Blunt revelations could even have been discussed if our new Protection of Information Bill was passed. Having insisted upon it at the beginning of the week of the revelations, Mrs. Thatcher announced that it would be dropped "for the time being." Which is something.

The fact that so many facile conclusions have been drawn does not mean that the affair is a meaningless farce. Properly considered, away from the hysterics of Fleet Street, it reminds us that treachery and sabotage in Britain have always been the prerogatives of the self-appointed elite and the hereditary system: those who really do believe that they have a right to rule and that they are above any sectional or national interest. Even in their attachment to Communism—fleeting as it was—such people waited until it looked as if Stalin might be going to win, and deserted him when it became clear that he wasn't.

The affair should also have educated new generations in the past complicity of British Governments with Hitler, and

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the dismal collaboration of many apparent flag-wavers with the most dangerous enemy the country (or any other country) ever had. Finally, the whole Blunt saga should have brought home the need for open government and for free information. Instead, there has been an atmosphere of vindictive recrimination, dark suggestions that there are "more names to come," foul innuendoes about homosexuals and an exclusive concentration on Blunt's "fellow traveling." Against that you can score one for open government, but it isn't much of a consolation.

Forster's remark, that if faced with a choice between betraying his country and betraying his friends he hoped he would have the courage to betray his country, has often been taken as the epitome of faggot detachment and effete pacifism. The secret it really holds is the clue to the British establishment mentality—which always has put class before country, interest before patriotism, while claiming to speak in the most resonant national mode. Kipling's "Kim" says, as Kim Philby might have said, by way of an obituary for the 1930s and for the class that protected him:

> Something I owe to the soil that grew
> More to the lives that fed—
> But most to Allah, who gave me two
> Separate sides to my head. □

Conspiracies

(Continued From Front Cover)

"cumulative fall from innocence," this failure became a central feature of attacks on the lone-assassin theory. The strong establishment ties of the members of the Warren Commission also contributed to a widespread conviction that they had collectively served as the conscious instruments of betrayal, part of a "cover-up." And there is little doubt that the commission did consciously withhold its investigative resources from areas that might compromise the powers that be.

The House Select Committee's report reflects an even more serious bias—in conformity with the now widespread conspiracy consensus. This bias is reflected not, as in the case of the Warren Commission, in its investigative procedures but in the strained inferences and conclusions which it drew from the facts. The report and the conspiracy movement from which it has emerged illuminate a larger pattern of escapism, frustration and me-too politics which increasingly dominate Congress and its constituencies as we enter the 1980s. Moreover, the mandate by the House to investigate the assassinations not truly for a legislative purpose but proscriptively—to determine the innocence or guilt of individuals—demonstrates anew the ease with which Congressional power can, when the climate is favorable, be diverted to questionable uses.

The thrust to politicize assassinations and view them as the work of conspiracies answers several needs barely concealed beneath the surface of American life. Threatened by the randomness of serious crimes, we instinctively strive for an explanation of such acts as purposeful and rational. Even in so clear a case of uncontested insanity as that of George Metesky, "the mad bomber," the majority of people polled expressed the conviction that he was the instrument of a conspiracy! When the victim is an important public figure, rationalizations of irrational acts are even more important. Is it possible that the very embodiment of the principles by which we live as people can be destroyed by the action of a nobody? And a nobody who lacks even the capacity to control his own behavior? If a President is to be taken from us, it can only be by a powerful malignant counterforce, not by a random crank. To make our loss bearable, we need to attribute it to a conspiracy matching the dead leader in power and status.

Historically, real conspiracies associated with assassinations of important public figures are marked by a distinctive motivation, structure and background in both the political culture and the mass consciousness. But the facts adduced to support the House Select Committee's conspiracy claim, even if true, bespeak a far different kind of group action. The committee is talking, in both the King and Kennedy cases, about the unaided acts of isolated individuals with clear responsibility, acts which just might have had the support and encouragement of others, but which lack in any event the political resonance of a true assassination conspiracy. It has tried to bridge this gap by playing semantic games with the word *conspiracy*.

The committee justifies its strained use of the language of conspiracy with a technicality: for legal purposes, all conspiracies are "partnerships in crime." In presenting its conclusions, it uneasily acknowledges that "widely varying meanings" attach to the term *conspiracy*, but argues that "euphemistic variations can lead to a lack of candor," and that "plain truth should not be avoided even if it causes discomfort." But it is the committee's "plain truth" that is a form of deception and indeed reflects "a lack of candor."

In any event, the basis for the conspiracy finding in the Kennedy case is highly dubious acoustical evidence of gunfire by a second (grassy knoll) shooter. The infirmity of this evidence cannot be cured by the conflicting testimony about puffs of smoke from the grassy knoll. The required supporting evidence—eyewitness reports, spent bullets, flight—is altogether lacking, as is evidence of group involvement. If the two putative gunmen fired at the same time, they were presumably under external direction and control. (If, miraculously, they fired independently of each other, the conspiracy thesis falls apart altogether.) But such planned or on-the-scene coordination is blithely left to the imagination. More: the key concerns of a conspiracy aimed at the public murder of a well-guarded target are, first, to take care of the logistics of access and, then, to reduce the risks of apprehension. Here we are invited to believe that the conspirators chose to *increase* the risk to the entire group by assigning

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two members to the hit while altogether neglecting to organize an escape plan. Or should we, plucking a leaf from the *oeuvre* of assassinology, assume that both gunmen were nutty fall guys manipulated by unseen masters from some remote hide-out and deliberately thrown to the wolves in the last act of a superplot?

Equally unimpressive is the King conspiracy contention—that James Earl Ray was motivated by a bounty offer from two St. Louis businessmen, who are cast as core conspirators. The committee relies for its bounty conspiracy script on a story from a gamy source, one Russell Byers, whose committee testimony was given under an immunity grant. And Byers had great need for immunity. A convicted thief, he was characterized by his own attorney as "one of the most degenerate criminals in St. Louis."

The committee concedes that "it was unable to uncover a direct link between the principals of the St. Louis conspiracy and James Earl Ray and his brothers." A footnote informs the reader that John Ray (Ray's brother, who owned a tavern in St. Louis) denied under oath knowing either the alleged conspirators or Byers or having heard about the bounty offer. The committee nevertheless insists that he could have learned about the offer and transmitted it to his brother James, who, we are reminded, visited the St. Louis area "at least twice" during the period when he was a fugitive. One of these occasions, according to the committee, was the alleged joint robbery by the brothers of a bank in Alton, Illinois—the fruit of a wholly conjectural piece of detective work by the committee. The committee has a way of floating speculations and then retreating in self-doubt, a practice that permits it to embrace the implausible and unproved without at the same time entirely forfeiting its credibility.

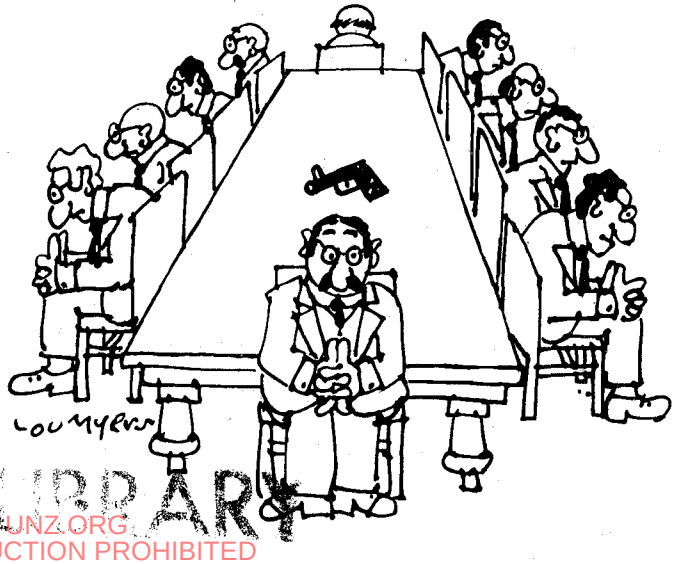
After adopting the bounty conspiracy thesis, based on Byers's highly questionable testimony, and then conceding the lack of proof of the communication of the offer (or a payoff) to Ray (or a family member) either before or after the assassination, the committee's report again returns to a conspiracy beat punctuated by a flurry of subjunctives—"could have," "would have," "might have"—and variations on the "possibility" of a conspiracy.

The committee makes Ray's alleged greed for money the fuse of the murder, and grotesquely minimizes his racial bigotry. He was not, the committee insists, a "rabid racist" who would have killed King without a financial incentive. But the evidence of Ray's sociopathic racism cannot be so lightly ignored in assessing its motivating power. Here is a man who admired the Nazis and gave the Nazi salute in public, joined the Army in the hope of aiding in the rehabilitation of the Nazi movement in Germany, planned to make his escape to Rhodesia where (he thought) his deeds would be honored, revealed his racism to prison inmates and authorities, after his capture told his custodial officer in England, Chief Inspector Alexander Eist, that he hated blacks, was proud of the murder and wanted to get to Africa to "kill some niggers." Given this and other evidence of Ray's racism, the committee nevertheless determinedly tailored its interpretation of Ray's motivation to fit its conspiracy thesis. It failed to recognize the simple fact that, while Ray *ultimately* expected fame and fortune, what reduced his *perception* of risk, which is the master clue to motivation, was not money but hate.

But the distortion of motivation to fit a conspiracy hypothesis even more seriously mars the committee's treatment of the Kennedy assassination. Since the attempt in 1838 on the life of Andrew Jackson by Richard Lawrence, there have been a total of twelve attempts on the lives of Presidents and candidates for the Presidency, of which five have succeeded. *All* of them, with the sole exception of the attempt by the Puerto Rican nationalists on the life of President Truman, have been unified by a common pattern: a single psychopathic gunman acting alone. (The Lincoln assassination is no exception: John Wilkes Booth was a deranged loser who killed Lincoln on his own, abandoning at the last moment a prior kidnap-hostage conspiracy plan.)

Our national experience contrasts with the history of assassination in countries all over the world, which abounds in instances of classic Brutus-style conspiracies organized to bring about a transfer of power or to call attention to injustice ("propaganda of the deed"). History, both ancient and modern, also supplies examples of assassinations in foreign countries by single individuals, ranging from the tyrannicidal and the avenging through Dostoyevsky's "rational homicide," the reasoned elimination on ethical or moral grounds of a figure embodying or symbolizing injustice or oppression.

But these are not the models drawn from *our* past, and in order to make Lee Harvey Oswald a suitable candidate for a group crime, a man who would trust and be trusted by others to share an enormous risk, the committee ignored the psychological profile of our unique breed of assassins. The committee does not bother to explain why Oswald's head was straighter than those who preceded or followed him—Sirhan Sirhan, Arthur Bremer, Sara Jane Moore and Lynette ("Squeaky") Fromme. One does not expect a clinical diagnosis, but Oswald's psychological biography reflects a pattern made all too familiar by our history. A posthumous child, buffeted by an assortment of blows—affectionless, separated from his brothers—Oswald became a truant and was remanded for psychiatric observation. An



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early examination showed distinct psychotic symptoms: detachment from the world and fantasies about power and fame. His short life was marked by violence including threats with a knife against his brother and sister-in-law, striking his mother on more than one occasion and subsequently beating his wife, Marina. To these we must add threats against Eisenhower and later Nixon, a self-inflicted wound in Japan and a later wrist-slashing in the Soviet Union, the attempted murder of Gen. Edwin A. Walker and the post-assassination killing of Dallas policeman J.D. Tippit.

In an investigation which purports to persuade us that Oswald acted with others, the committee apparently found no significance in (and did not even refer to) Oswald's statement while under interrogation by a Dallas police officer that "everybody will know who I am now." This is the familiar howl of the embattled self hungering for fame which has been heard in the cries of, among others, Booth ("When I leave the stage for good I will be the most famous man in America"); Bremer (to a police officer: "Just stay with me and you will be a star like I am"), and Sirhan ("I am famous; I have achieved in a day what it took Kennedy all his life to do"). Here, too, the anomie and paranoia that spawn such dreams of glory would render implausible the capacity for group involvement and shared motivation which the committee's conspiracy thesis requires. In order to overcome this obstacle, the committee is forced to use politics as an armature for its thesis. But this is not easy: the thrust to politicize assassinations and thus to exploit the vulnerability of a grieving constituency by linking assassinations to purposeful, discontented groups has historically (after an initial flurry of conspiracy charges) foundered on the reality of the assassin's dottiness.

The committee makes Oswald a "Marxist" acting with (unidentified) others to achieve a political goal. Only a Marxist, the committee argues, could have defected to the Soviet Union, organized a (one-man) branch of the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, sat for a photograph armed to the teeth and holding copies of Communist journals, etc. As the committee pictures this "Marxist," he is a freelance gunslinger without an organizational base, stalking game in the capitalist badlands. But the committee never tells us why a Marxist would, alone or with others, try to kill General Walker or what Marxist cause or interest would be served by the murder of J.F.K. Oswald's Marxism is a version of a theme familiar in the history of American assassinations—"politics in the head" (Andrew Hacker calls it "personal politics"): the resort by assassins to the language of politics as a projection for uncontrollable personal impulses. Oswald's Marxism is of a piece with Booth's commitment to the Confederate cause, Czolgosz's anarchism, Guiteau's Republicanism, Bremer's radicalism or Fromme's environmentalism. All of these are but labels for the fantasies of alienated psychotics—brooding in hall bedrooms—the true politics of the American assassin.

The committee's evaluation of the Jack Ruby connection is similarly overburdened by its conspiracy bias. Ruby's instability is ignored, as is the historic phenomenon of the assassin's assassin, the individual who removes the assassin for personal reasons—a divine message is a favorite. The committee presumably relies, as do almost all of the conspiraphiles, on the ruling of a Texas court that Ruby was legally sane, that is, responsible for his acts, under the M'Naghten Rule, an issue quite irrelevant to an understanding of his motivation and of the possible involvement of others. Predictably, his own professed reason for killing Oswald—sympathy for the President's widow and children—is rejected as his lawyer's invention, despite corroborative evidence.

In its waffling style, the committee suggests that Ruby was recruited to silence Oswald by the mob as part of a plot to neutralize R.F.K.'s organized-crime program. (What gamblers these chaps! How could they be certain that R.F.K. would leave his job if his brother were no longer President? In fact, as it turned out, Lyndon Johnson wanted Kennedy to stay on in order to protect himself against a political threat.) Both the organized-crime and the anti-Castro mob figures with whom Oswald was supposedly linked were presumably right-wingers. Oswald was a leftist; why should these mobsters entrust him with the high-risk role of hit man? But hold! Was Oswald all that left wing? Wasn't he a pal of George de Mohrenschildt, a mysterious right-wing figure, with C.I.A. connections? Didn't he offer his services to an anti-Castro paramilitary operation, and wasn't he associated with David Ferrie, an anti-Castro C.I.A. contract operative and associate of Carlos Marcello? The committee in the end admits that it cannot link Oswald with any conspiratorial group, but how fishy everything smells!

For the most part, the leaders and activist champions of the conspiracy constituency are drawn from the New Left. As the New Left declined from the mid-1960s on, the investigation of assassinations became a major item on its agenda. Afflicted by a sense of loss and powerlessness, those identified with the declining radicalism of the 1960s sought in conspiracy theories an escape from the grubby task of beginning anew and organizing around issues that would influence policy and action. The temptations to follow this escapist route were considerable: a ready-made demotic fellowship shaped by pain and grief; a pervasive distrust of official explanations; an unusually receptive media support network; a free-floating social paranoia (killer bees, U.F.O.s, the Bermuda Triangle, etc.), and most important of all, of course, an issue bigger than itself.

Like rightists in the past, many radicals shrank from the complexity of power relations, preferring to attribute their frustrations to identifiable evil men, gun-wielding conspirators. The conspiracy fever in the left community, as it emerged in the late 1960s, was a paradigm for Christopher Lasch's "culture of narcissism." This is apparent in the conspiraphiles' fascination with the sensational and in their preference for the conceivable over the real or the probable; in their search for political highs in bizarre theories; in their media peacockery, and their rejection of the past as a guide. The literature of conspiracy is astonishing not so much for

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what it says but in its silence about our past. It leaves us with a sense, as Lasch puts it, "of living in a world in which the past holds out no guidance to the present."

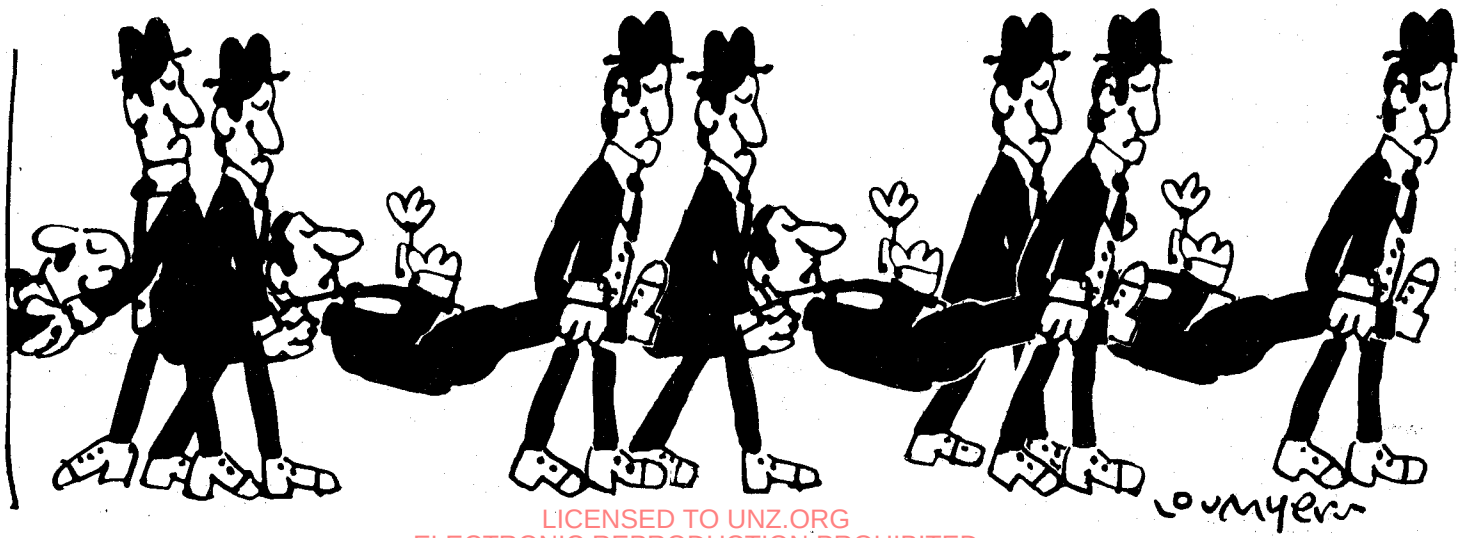
This thrust to politicize conspiracies gradually developed an ideology, a haphazard theoretical system structured around a network of conspiracies, ultimately merging into a huge meta-conspiracy controlled by our hidden rulers. Watergate and the F.B.I.-C.I.A. scandals, with their roots in demonstrable conspiracies, spurred the imagination of the conspiraphiles to spin out ever more sinister reticulations for an emerging mass-media market (a subject I will discuss later). In addition, newsletters, broadcasts and "hot lines" poured out a stream of increasingly spookish offerings full of trendy intelligence jargon tracing webs of "connections" to an assortment of masterminds. In this process, a key role was played by the "cover-up," an intelligence practice brought to the popular consciousness by Watergate. Thus, every stage in the conspiratorial cycle was matched by a conspiracy (typically by intelligence bigwigs) to conceal it—a process that at once explains the absence of evidence to support a particular conspiracy claim and demonstrates the power and deviousness of the plotters. A related self-proving gambit is the charge that doubters and critics are themselves really concealed intelligence operatives.

The extent to which the cover-up has become embedded in the conspiracy mythos is perhaps best illustrated by the courtroom statement of Sara Jane Moore following her attempt to assassinate President Ford in 1975. She explained that her act was an attempt to trigger an investigation of the Government cover-up of its own assassinations of prominent figures.

Along with crack-pot realists, self-serving experts and authors of lurid exposés, the conspiracy movement has attracted a body of intellectuals and scholars. The older literature, in the wake of the Warren Commission report, as well as more recent productions, following the second (post-1968) surge of conspiracy writings, often reflect valid motives: a hunger for an explanation free of distortions, omissions and the bias which one has come to expect of official versions of controversial events. Such explanations have inevitably challenged the resourcefulness of the investigator and the ingenuity of the scholar. Indeed, such a challenge has led to strange journeys, such as the desertion of the classroom by philosophy professor and conspiralogist Josiah Thompson (*Six Seconds in Dallas*) for a career as a private investigator.

More than any single individual, novelist Norman Mailer has provided a bridge between conspiracy politics and culture. Flashy and narcissistic, he invited contempt for reality by treating it as a mere stage for clods. Mailer saw himself as writer-disrupter, the prophetic voice of American chaos and corruption, the poet of secret plots, the exposer of the secret government which he dubbed "The Fifth Estate." His fascination with a hyped-up version of reality made his novel writing pallid; it was "The Novel as History, History as a Novel." Conspiracy became the metaphor for the hidden meaning of power, and then replaced the reality it purported to describe. If it was conceivable, it was true. As Lasch has noted, the issue was no longer truth: "Truth has given way to credibility, facts to statements that sound authoritative without conveying any authoritative information." Nothing less than a new politics was being forged, the politics of the imagination.

Mailer developed his views in a series of essays and in a biography of Marilyn Monroe. The book argues that Monroe may have been murdered by a conspiracy spearheaded by the C.I.A., the F.B.I., the Mafia or "half of the secret police of the world," that she had been under surveillance perhaps because she had been married to a playwright denied a passport for supporting a Communist movement (Arthur Miller). Mailer isn't sure whether she was murdered in order to protect the reputation of the Kennedys, to amass evidence against them, or simply to use an alleged affair between Monroe and R.F.K. as a means of blackmailing the President. But, he insists, "by the end, political stakes were riding high on her life and even more on her death. If she could be murdered in such a way as to appear a suicide in despair at the turn of her love, what a point of pressure could be maintained [by right-wingers] against the Kennedys." Given such fishy possibilities, why insist on evidence? But we are not through yet; "Why not assume," Mailer asks, "even more and see her death as the seed for assassinations to follow?" (Unpersuaded right-wing conspiraphiles can find comfort in Frank A. Capell's *Strange Death of Marilyn*



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Monroe, which argues that Monroe was murdered by a conspiracy of Communist agents in order to silence her.)

If Norman Mailer is the poet of conspiraphilia, Mark Lane is its battlefield commander. Despite serious credibility setbacks, his following, especially on the campus, where he tours a highly profitable lecture circuit, is considerable. He shared this audience with Carl Oglesby's Assassination Information Bureau which, until its recent dissolution, specialized in a more ideological interpretation of the assassination phenomenon. (Oglesby's book, *The Yankee and Cowboy War*, links Watergate and Dallas as rounds in a struggle between the old money of the Eastern Seaboard and the new wealth of the West. Hailed by Mailer, its ingenuity, story line and plot construction earn it high marks—but purely as fiction.)

Lane's rise to the top of the heap is a product of his ability to exploit his role as a lawyer, his media skills, his claimed leftist support and self-promotional powers. His *modus operandi* has been to secure smoking-gun clients, proclaim their innocence, and charge a Government frame-up. Thus, Lane has insisted that Oswald was framed, that the rifle traced to him was a plant and not the one used in the J.F.K. assassination, that the bullet linked to this rifle was also a plant and that the C.I.A. was involved in the assassination. In the same way, he charged (in his book *Code Name "Zorro"*) that the F.B.I. engineered the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. and that his client, Ray, was a patsy. He was retained by the Rev. Jim Jones to obtain intelligence files on the People's Temple after feeding Jones's paranoia with the charge that a sinister intelligence cabal was seeking the group's destruction. The mass poisoning then became Lane's vindication, grim proof of his conspiracy charges.

The assassination conspiracy cult has produced a huge body of literature. The J.F.K. assassination alone is the subject of an estimated 150 books, hundreds of periodical pieces and at least ten newsletters including *JFK Assassination Forum*, published in Belfast. No less than five annotated bibliographies describe the Dallas literature alone. In addition, the assassination movement as a whole is served by groups such as: the Committee to Investigate Assassinations (directed by Bernard Fensterwald), the Citizens Commission of Inquiry (Mark Lane), the Campaign for Democratic Freedom (Donald Freed) and the Committee to Investigate Political Assassinations.

Dominating the assassination movement and its literature is the politicization of the killings of public figures by attributing them to right-wing or establishment inspiration. This originated in the need to respond to charges that Dallas was the result of a Communist plot, and that, more grandly—to quote a right-wing columnist—"Oswald was an instrument of a global Communist conspiracy." Indeed, it was Warren Commission member (then) Congressman Gerald R. Ford who insisted on inserting a reference to Oswald's Communism in the commission's findings. Thus, in the dominant sectors of the conspiracy movement, Oswald is considered either innocent (the victim of a frame-up), a right-winger, an F.B.I. informer or a C.I.A. agent. For the right he is still a Communist or a K.G.B. agent. All of these roles require a subordination or suppression of the fact of Oswald's mental instability. He is introduced to us as a spy recruited *in situ* by the F.B.I., as a Russian agent, as an agent of Castroites seeking to infiltrate the anti-Castro movement and vice versa and as a double agent. In a second stage his dismembered persona is distributed to look-alikes, decoys and stand-ins, and finally cloned into "the two Oswalds" and "the three Oswalds." These conspiracy scenarios draw on aspects of agent-informer-target relationships—vicariousness, impersonation, deception and role-playing—to politicize a classic theme in Western literature (E.T.A. Hoffmann, Dostoyevsky and Joseph Conrad are examples), that of the double.

Where the shifting of responsibility for an assassination is thwarted by physical reality, robotization ("Manchurian candidate") theories come into play. Here too, intelligence practice has influenced the imagination of conspiraphiles. Phenomena such as the manipulation of the informer by his agent control or C.I.A.-style drug-induced behavioral controls are grafted onto hypnotism, occultism and computer data processing. Thus, a theory of "hypno-programming" dominates the Sirhan-R.F.K. and Bremer-Wallace literature. The Manchurian candidate approach has also been used to exonerate Oswald. According to Prof. Richard Popkin, the J.F.K. killing was committed by a group of "zombie assassins" programmed by the C.I.A. The objections of earthlings enslaved by smoking-gun reality are dismissed as a tribute to the skill of the (far-off) programmer who not only took control of his victim's mind but also with awesome cunning blanked out his memory of what happened. This even takes care of the protestations of the killer himself that he acted alone.

The Oswald-as-C.I.A.-spy thesis is developed in detail by Robert Sam Anson in *They've Killed the President*, a Bantam Books project. Anson makes Oswald a C.I.A. operative whose defection and return were stages in an elaborate intelligence plot. Complete with look-alikes, suspicious coincidences and sinister motives, Anson's narrative scorns facts that stand in the way or converts them into proof by strained inferences. For Anson, it is "Only connect," with a vengeance. But the spirit of E.M. Forster's teaching burns even more brightly in the works of other conspiraphiles. For example, former F.B.I. agent William Turner has called attention to a sinister link between the King and Kennedy assassinations, namely, that in both cases a rifle with a telescopic sight "was conveniently left at the crime scene." Is this not a clue to the *modus operandi* of a single group of conspirators?

Anson makes Oswald an American intelligence agent, but another investigative author, Edward J. Epstein, makes him a K.G.B. agent (*Legend*). Epstein's earlier book, *Inquest*, won praise for its skillful dissection of the Warren Commission's report. In *Counterplot*, he furthered the image of the sober objective investigator by exposing New Orleans District Attorney Jim Garrison. In *Agency of Fear*—sensational and factually dubious as it is—he lectures the reader on the need to subject investigative reporting to the test of truth. But *Legend*, an ambitious project sponsored by the

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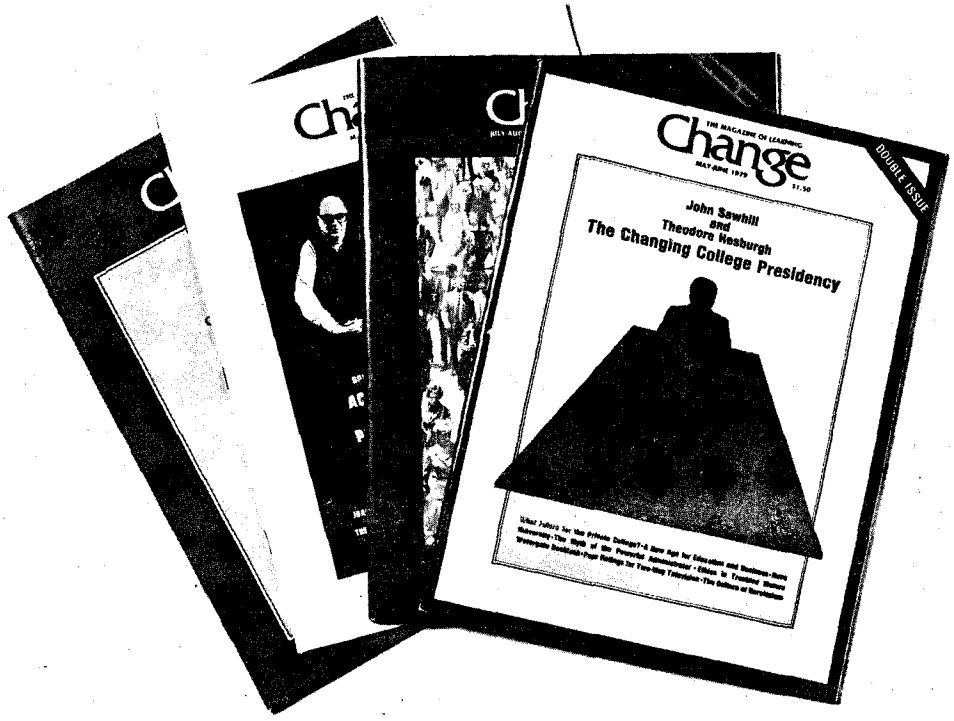

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Reader's Digest and funded by a huge advance, is as bizarre a contribution to the literature of conspiracy as the efforts Epstein had earlier deplored and exposed. This rational man's conspiracy expert has seemed to some a latter-day version of the nineteenth-century confidence operator who gains trust by appealing to a hunger for authenticity and truth. Epstein's thesis (or scam) is that after Oswald's stay in the Soviet Union and a prior stint as a Russian spy in the Marine Corps, he returned to America to renew his spying for the K.G.B. equipped with a cover story, a "legend." His alleged K.G.B. control, defector Yuri Ivanovich Nosenko, was, in Epstein's version, a "disinformation agent," or, in the C.I.A.'s usage, a "dispatched agent" assigned to protect his cover. Unlike lowlier toilers in the vineyard, Epstein has access to an important source—James J. Angleton, the C.I.A.'s now retired superspook. Despite the credibility risk presented by this prophet of the long twilight struggle, Epstein apparently bought Angleton's thesis that Nosenko, too, was cloaked in a legend, a contention long ago disputed as a fantasy in high-level C.I.A. circles.

And to prove what a tangled web we weave when first we practice to deceive, Angleton claims that a K.G.B.-F.B.I. double agent named Fedora was also briefed by the K.G.B. to corroborate Nosenko's deception. Epstein writes that Oswald's legend required him to return to Texas, establish himself in the area with some sort of job, and then wait for proper contacts to be made. The author admits that there is no indication that the Russians re-established contact with Oswald in America. But, Epstein insists, they did make Oswald bitter, because instead of returning him to the United States on an important mission they discarded him, forcing him to turn, in desperation, to the Cubans.

Epstein plays his K.G.B. games (so congenial to the politics of his sponsor) without bothering to deal with many troublesome questions. If, as he claims, Oswald was recruited in Japan, why should the K.G.B. encourage him, presumably a valuable "agent in place," to defect to the Soviet Union; why should it train for future spy work a man who, after he slit his wrists in the Soviet Union, was pronounced unstable by K.G.B. doctors, and why encourage him to leave with the risk that he would tell all, or fail to train him for a job in this country, such as a security-related occupation, which would at once provide both a cover and a source of information? What really lifts the skeptical reader out of his chair is Epstein's "proof" that Oswald's diary was dictated by the K.G.B. to provide support for his legend. The sole basis for this startling contention is the opinion of a handwriting expert (at best a highly ductile source) that the jerky quality of the diary's entries reflects dictation by a K.G.B. control. But there is uncontroverted evidence that Oswald wrote jerkily and spelled poorly because he was dyslexic. It is hard to say which is less excusable, the fact that with his huge resources Epstein failed to discover Oswald's learning disability or that he knew about it but suppressed it because it spoiled his (and Angleton's) "legend."

Still another version of "diary-diary-who-wrote-the-diary" is offered by British barrister-investigator Michael Eddowes. (We pass over the possibly tongue-in-cheek offering of novelist Gore Vidal who argues that the diaries of three assassination figures, Oswald, Sirhan and Bremer, may all have been written by one man, E. Howard Hunt.)

Eddowes, traveling the same path as Anson and Epstein, reaches a third destination. He argues that Oswald was replaced at some point by a K.G.B. agent who wrote the Oswald diary and was shipped out of the country to the United States as a "sleeper." In his version, Marina and her infant child were accomplices in the deception. Oswald the husband and Oswald the son ("the historic Oswald" in the usage of the trade) were two different people. The fact that the imposter's fingerprints matched those taken when Oswald was in the Marine Corps presents no difficulty at all —merely a K.G.B. trick. Eddowes finds it "beyond comprehension" that the Warren Commission failed to consider the evidence pointing to K.G.B. complicity. Still, all may not be lost: Eddowes recently persuaded the Dallas County Medical Examiner to request authorization to exhume the body of the man who was buried as Oswald.

It is hardly likely that the Dallas exhumation furor will reinvigorate a flagging assassination conspiracy movement. The committee's report has dealt a blow to the politics of conspiracy by demolishing virtually the entire construction of contentions—the Zapruder film, the virgin bullet, the forged photographs and related mystifications—upon which the movement rests. There would appear to be little mileage to be gained at this late date by attributing to a cover-up the Justice Department's failure to pursue the wispy new leads dredged up by the committee.

A death blow will surely come from another quarter—the media. The prominence of media-broker Lawrence Schiller in Mailer's story of the life and execution of Gary Gilmore, *The Executioner's Song*, dramatizes the media's dominance in our time in shaping and ordering public concerns. To an extent barely realized, the conspiracy movement is a media offspring. Through generous coverage (not only in the press and periodicals but also on TV and in books and films), it promoted the conspiracy mythos, constantly broadening its scope. Interviews and bylines gave luster to superstars who in turn vied with one another in the quest for fresh investigative and media triumphs. But lacking new scripts, its growth potential has been exhausted. A Mark Lane may seek to renew his priesthood in the blood of Jonestown, but for his followers and others who have worshipped at the conspiracy shrine, hard morning-after questions remain.

Is it not time to abandon the escapism, media hustle and radical chic of political conspiraphilia and face the desperate challenge of organizing a left movement in this country? Perhaps the will to go forward may be strengthened by reflecting on the insights of the radical philosopher Herbert Marcuse, who has described the unique capacity of our system to absorb radical challenge by adopting its symbols. In any case, we cannot permit the political meaning of what has been done to us by real conspirators to be lost in the cries of "Wolf!" by those for whom the truth is never bad enough. □

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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

A Plague of Pop Grammarians

JIM QUINN

LESS THAN WORDS CAN SAY. *By Richard Mitchell. Little, Brown & Company. 220 pp. $8.95.*

Richard Mitchell, author of *Less Than Words Can Say,* is a professor of English at Glassboro State College, New Jersey. He got to be famous—famous enough for TV talk shows—by putting out a newsletter called *The Underground Grammarian*, which ridicules the language college deans use in their memorandums, and freshmen in their themes. Maybe the newsletter was good fun—like those gleeful little fillers in *The New Yorker* that find strange new meanings in typos and comma faults—but *Less Than Words Can Say* is not fun. It is against fun: democratic government, public schools, the English language, human thought and human survival are all in danger of disappearing. Because Americans can't write good prose.

We have heard all this before. Prophets of the death of English come and go like swarms of cicadas, filling the trees with their shells and the air with their dreamy screaming. We are now infested with a very large swarm (Edwin Newman, William Safire, John Simon, Thomas Middleton), and Mitchell might have got lost in the general welter of warnings were it not for the new and serious ideas he proposes.

One is that civilization is threatened by the passive voice.

Another is that Black English was invented by "some unknown genius" whose purpose was "to postpone Black literacy for decades and perhaps forever."

Another is that violation of subject-verb agreement demonstrates incompetence in the writer no matter what his field—it is "the equivalent of a pharmacist handing out the wrong pills."

Another is that "an educational system that does not teach the technology of writing"—that is, that does not concentrate on the rules of traditional grammar books—"is preventing thought."

At least, I *think* those are the major arguments of *Less Than Words Can Say.* It is very difficult to tell, in this disorganized book, where metaphor leaves off and reality begins. And it is very difficult to separate the argument from the style—that of a rambling classroom lecture by the kind of teacher who likes to describe himself as a curmudgeon.

We learn about the dangers of the passive by learning about a tribe called the Jiukiukwe—who have no fire, no clothing, no shelter, no knots, no tools, a complicated system of counting that begins with the knuckle at the base of the little finger of the left hand, and no existence. Mitchell has made them up, the better to demonstrate conclusively the cause of their backwardness. Unlike civilized people (like us, or the inhabitants of Manhasset, Long Island), the Jiukiukwe speak only in the passive voice. "Every other difference is because of this difference; this is *the* difference . . . from which all smaller differences flow." The passive voice does not require an active subject, so the Jiukiukwe see the world in an entirely passive way—and live only on tree grubs. Deans and bureaucrats write in the passive, says Mitchell. Therefore, deans and bureaucrats are a danger to civilization. The logic is irrefutable.

If any member of the Jiukiukwe suddenly started to use the active voice, he would work harder and harder and soon become like the Manhassetite, and the whole tribe would "copy his verbs and his technology. . . ." Language and technology change together and to Mitchell "it seems more likely that language must change before technology."

We understand the value of the Jiukiukwe in the classroom—teacher begins with a metaphor "to make it real for us" and elaborates it at random. We never forget. If we are the kind of old grad who goes back to school and visits the kind of teacher we call a curmudgeon, we almost always start by saying, "You know what I remember? I remember the Jiukiukwe, who couldn't even tie knots and had to count on their fingers. And every time I'm tempted to use the passive, I rewrite the sentence—and stave off chaos for another year."

But classroom technique is not argument and metaphor is not fact. There are in fact no people as primitive as the Jiukiukwe. It has never been demonstrated that grammar limits activity. All human languages are capable of expressing what any human language can express. In English, we say the man sits *at his table.* No one supposes the table has male genitals. In French, the man sits *à sa table.* No one supposes the man is female. French and English have different grammatical forms to describe the same event—but the French and English languages describe the event equally well.

But there is another answer to Mitchell. It is not in fact true that the Manhassetite is distinguished by his preference for the active. In fact, as Thomas Lounsbury pointed out long ago (*English Language*, 1879): "There is nothing more supremely characteristic of our speech, especially in its later periods, than the extent to which it has developed the use of passive formations. In this respect it has gone far beyond any other cultivated modern tongue." Oddly enough, it was the nineteenth century—the century of the great technological advances of the Industrial Revolution—that introduced entirely new forms of the passive into English. If Richard Mitchell knew anything about the history of the English language, he would have concluded that the new passives made way for the production line and the railroad. His conclusion would have been equally silly—as history, as anthropology and as psychology—but at least it would have had one solitary fact to back it up.

To demonstrate that bad grammar equals incompetence, Mitchell quotes from a letter sent out by the executive secretary of the Michigan Board of Pharmacy: "If the death of neither man nor gnat are desired. . . ." *Are desired*, plural verb form, is used with *death*, a singular subject. Sometimes, Mitchell says, we are in doubt about the number of the subject in English—but surely not here. "A man might safely spend his life using singular verbs to go with singular

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subjects" in sentences like this. The mistake is equivalent to a teller counting wrong at a bank, a pharmacist handing out the wrong pills. "For our society the Secretary's mistake is *more* significant. . . . It suggests that a man in an important position . . . is careless and thoughtless in doing his work and that he seems not to have the habits of precision and correctness. . . ." It does no good to plead that the secretary wasn't paying attention. "Isn't it his job to pay attention? Is this the only time he failed to pay attention? If his work is incorrect in such a small and easy matter, it seems likely that it will contain mistakes in large matters . . . it is only a tiny indication of a much larger failure. . . ."

Mitchell goes on with this extremely bad-tempered and solemn rant for several paragraphs, presenting an argument that demolishes itself. We know that there are differences in mistakes. There are people, for example, who often make mistakes adding up long columns of figures. Yet if we ask them to add three and two they will always answer five. They know arithmetic, just as the secretary knows his language.

To the Mitchells of the world, of course, any minor error will always demonstrate incompetence—so in order to convince them, I have tried to demonstrate the silliness of that claim by . . . well, by lying.

The quotation about the death of man and gnat was not written by the executive secretary of the Michigan Board of Pharmacy. That secretary did write a sentence in which subject and verb do not agree in number, and Mitchell's argument is based entirely on that violation of schoolbook grammar. But the bit about death and the gnat was written by Charles Darwin, and you can find it—along with an explanation that this is a common occurrence in English—in Otto Jespersen's *Modern English Grammar*, Volume II.

If you agree with Mitchell, you must, it seems to me, now suspect not only the theory of evolution but also the correctness of the mass of Darwin's observation of animal behavior. And that is not all you must suspect:

"Experience is the name that *everybody* gives to *their* mistakes." The italics are mine, but the grammar is Oscar Wilde's.

"*Each* house [of Congress] shall keep a journal of its proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such parts as in *their* judgment require secrecy." Article I, Section 5, third paragraph of the Constitution of the United States of America.

Hard as it is for popular writers on language to accept, it is in fact true that in English, grammatical number frequently has as little to do with actual number as grammatical gender in French has to do with actual sex.

The argument that our schools are either deliberately or thoughtlessly preventing thought is delivered almost in a parody of Mitchell's method.

"It is no coincidence that the Greeks who first devised discursive prose also constructed formal logic," says Mitchell, for whom no two thoughts that come into his mind at once are ever anything but interdependent. "Thinking *is* coherent discourse, and the writing and the prose require one another. . . . It seems drastic, but we have to suspect that coherent thought is impossible for those who cannot construct coherent, continuous prose." We start with a declaration about the Greeks, which is offered without evidence. No evidence is presented anywhere in *Less Than Words Can Say*. This is a book without footnotes, without citations or bibliography (except for a few horrible examples like the executive secretary) and without learning. A few hours with the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* turn up no deviser of "discursive prose." The first known writer of Greek prose is Pherecydes (ca. 550 B.C.). The history of formal logic, says the *Encyclopaedia*, begins with Aristotle (384–322 B.C.). Surely if prose caused logic, it took a long time to do it. And surely Confucius (551–479 B.C.), to mention only one great thinker who was not influenced by Greek inventions or by formal logic, was capable of prose, and of coherent thought? Surely it took coherent thought to build Stonehenge? Or to create the civilization of the Aztecs?

Mitchell's "suspicion" becomes suspect in itself—the very apology of its manner seems designed as a rhetorical trick to stop us from checking up on the facts. And the "suspicion" is restated a few pages later as fact, without any apology, and with Mitchell's characteristic intolerance and arrogance: "The logic of writing is simply logic. . . . People who cannot put strings of sentences together in good order cannot think. An educational system that does not teach the technology of writing is preventing thought."

I do not want to fall into Mitchell's trap of making mountains out of minor details—but it seems to me that moving from an unfounded suspicion to a declaration of fact in this manner is evidence either of fundamental confusion of ideas or fundamental intellectual dishonesty.

The declaration that Black English was "a gimmick" invented by an "unknown genius" whose purpose was "to postpone Black literacy for decades and perhaps forever" is on a level with the rest of the silliness in *Less Than Words Can Say*. The most important work in the study of Black English is *Language in the Inner City*, by William Labov (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972). Labov reports the work of four investigators: himself, Paul Cohen, Clarence Robins and John Lewis. Robins and Lewis are black. Many people, black and white, have disagreed with conclusions in *Language in the Inner City* about what Labov calls Black Vernacular English (Black English, he points out, includes many different dialects and different kinds of writing: from Richard Wright and Ralph Bunche to the first compositions of ghetto children). No one except Mitchell, who is apparently unacquainted with this major work, has ever questioned the integrity and honesty of the investigators or of the book. No one except Mitchell has ever denied that the goal of the book was to make it easier to teach black children to read. The witless arrogance of Mitchell's accusation is really almost without parallel—as if someone who had never read a word about it would declare the establishment of the state of Israel to be an anti-Semitic plot.

Mitchell's arrogance does not, of course, destroy the argument of those people who say that Black Vernacular English is really only a sort of slang, not a separate language, and that black children—like all children—ought to be taught Standard English so that they can get good jobs and rise from poverty. After all, it is true that many employers and many college entrance exams discriminate against students who do not use the standard dialect well. They should learn the rules of grammar.

It is impossible to answer that argument completely in reviewing a book that does not bother to state it clearly and coherently—but here are a few counterarguments:

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There is really no point in arguing whether Black Vernacular English is a language, a dialect, an argot or a slang. That's like arguing whether a particular plant is a wildflower or a weed—the distinction is meaningless to botanists. The distinction between a language and a dialect is also meaningless to linguists. English is related to German: both are Indo-European languages. They did not start out as dialects and then get promoted to language status because they were used for great literature or great scientific discovery—any more than a weed becomes a wildflower by being pretty.

Black English is praised (condescendingly) by Mitchell because "its blithe disregard of grammatical form is as crafty as it is cocky." But Black Vernacular English does not disregard grammatical form: because it is a language, it must follow rules of grammar. They are different from the rules of Standard English and from the rules of most other American dialects. But to suppose that any language can function without grammar is like supposing that airplanes defy the law of gravity. On the contrary, airplanes obey the laws of gravity—and of thermodynamics.

Labov points out some features of Black Vernacular English that are different from Standard English: the suffix *-ed* is not used to mark the past tense. This may lead to problems when ghetto children learn to read sentences where *-ed* is used. Pronunciation is completely different. For example, in the language of these children, the word *trial* and the word *child* may be pronounced exactly alike. If the teacher is telling kids to sound out the word before spelling it, the ghetto kid is going to have more trouble than his white fellow students.

We may think that the dialect is ugly. We may regret its existence. But it seems silly to ignore it, and silly to expect that schools—starting now—will be able to stamp it out.

I do not believe that Black Vernacular English is ugly—or that it should be stamped out. If it were possible to turn every black child white by administering some sort of pill, I think that would be a bad idea. A loss to a pluralistic society. If it were possible to turn Black Vernacular English into Standard by administering eight years of school, I think that would also be a loss. As great as the loss of the Irish brogue, the Scottish burr, the Southern drawl or the Yankee twang.

School also does not seem to be the best place to change dialect. Our native way of talking—the one we learned from our mothers and fathers, the one we use in order to cry out in pain or delight—is too much a part of our idea of self. Alfred Kazin, in *A Walker in the City*, talks about how the Standard English taught in school was both a passport to success and a symbol to both parents and children of how shameful it was to be un-American and Jewish. Kazin suffered because he was forced to go to language class to correct a stutter; these are the sufferings of a child forced outside "the bright circle of the city" and abandoned as inadequate. Surely we do not want our schools to teach children that the language of their parents and friends, of their whole culture, is inadequate and ignorant and wrong. Surely that is one lesson that is likely to make them resist other "learning."

The fact remains that there is a way of writing that is necessary to success, just as there are rules about which fork to use at an expensive restaurant. And preparing children for success means preparing them to manipulate those rules, just as they have to be taught to manipulate the salad fork and the demitasse spoon. There is really no argument about teaching children to read and write Standard English—only about how it is to be done. With humanity and with understanding, or with drills that the children cannot understand.

There is another question, of course: What kind of Standard shall we teach our children? Shall we teach them a set of rules that no one follows? Or shall we teach them the actual dialect of the successful? As an example, Charles Fries, in 1940, wrote *American English Grammar*, subtitled "The Grammatical Structure of Present-Day American English with Especial Reference to Social Differences or Class Dialects." He got access to letters written to the United States Army during World War I, asking for early discharges for soldiers. He divided the letters into three classes: the illiterate, who mentioned in the letters that they had not finished eighth grade and demonstrated that they could not punctuate or spell Standard English; the upper class, who mentioned in the letters that they had graduated from college and were successful professionals with considerable standing in their communities and who made no gross errors in punctuation or spelling, and the middle class—everybody in the middle. Fries found that expressions like "these kind of things"—a grammatical confusion of logical number both prized and despised as a horrible example by so-called purists, could only be found in upper-class writing. The lowest class used "them kind of things." The middle class avoided the construction entirely. What shall we teach our chidlren is correct? Which construction is a barrier to success?

Finally, doesn't it seem sensible to teach children—while we are teaching them this magical language of success—that there is such a thing as tolerance, even of people so different as to say, "He ax me yesterday"? If we must change the language of our children, can't we at least try to point out to them that they have a chance, by being sensible and humane, to make it unnecessary to change the language of our grandchildren? And if the language is to be changed, wouldn't it be better to put the responsibility for the change into the hands of people who are willing to learn something about language?

At least, it seems to me, we should not be taken in by writers like Mitchell and appalling books like *Less Than Words Can Say*. On the dust jacket of

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this book Edwin Newman, himself a writer of grotesque books on language, says of Mitchell, "If English is saved, he will be one of its saviors." The problem is that Mitchell and Newman want to save English from the people who speak it. But English does not need to be saved. The study of English needs to be saved—from the ignorance and the mindless adherence to traditional prejudice that make Newman and Mitchell possible. □

From Predator To Pussycat

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

ON MEN AND MANHOOD. *By Leonard Kriegel. Hawthorn Books. 206 pp. $10.95.*

I am tempted to begin thus: It takes a brave man to write, with criticism and regret but without empty bravado or cloying self-excoriation, about men and manhood in contemporary America. But my beginning turns back upon itself. I wonder: will my words be construed as ironic, a put-down in the guise of praise? That would be unfortunate, first, because it isn't true and, second, because it would suggest the pervasiveness of our current cynicism. Another turn: why does the phrase "brave man" spring to my mind, flow through my pen, rather than "brave person"? Forget, I tell myself, that you are heartily sick of person-peppered prose even as you accept the legitimacy of the intentions behind it. That reluctance alone would not account for my hesitance to call Leonard Kriegel a "brave person," even a "brave writer" rather than—again the words are apt, they fit—a "brave man." Simply that. Another turn, as the abyss yawns: perhaps I, too, am deeply immersed, with Kriegel, in language and meanings which are under assault. Perhaps the notion of the "brave man" still evokes a lively chain of associations and images for me, an American woman, younger than Kriegel by a decade or more, shaped in an isolated, rural Western place, not a frenetic, diverse Eastern City, Protestant rather than Jewish, yet united by being American, having read Hemingway, having gone to the same movies and been forced to face the challenge of polio at age 11 (for Kriegel), 10 (for me).

"Brave man," then. Were a woman to take up Kriegel's challenge, the phrase "brave woman" wouldn't flow quite so automatically. The evaluative term "brave" has lived more of its linguistic life in tandem with "man" than with "woman." I ponder. Should I object strongly to Kriegel's devoting a book to "man" and "manhood," given the links of these terms to "woman" and "womanhood," notions whose traditional implications I chafe against as I struggle with my identity as a woman, with womanhood? What should I make of my recognition that I am an American, a reality I question and challenge but, with Kriegel, would never deny or revile?

I stop. Kriegel's subject, finally, is not problems of identity faced by male and female Americans within a social system fraying about the edges. He is obdurate: "I have paid the prices demanded of me and will settle for no other category than American man." Very well. I will not shift the terrain of these reflections, nor will I evade that which Kriegel insists we confront. He cries: How can a male become a man, achieve his manhood and hold onto that achievement through courage and mastery in an age that robs him of the legacy on which he has built his self, an age that suspects, accuses, devalues and shrinks what he is and has become? "Our ideas of what a man is . . . no longer sustain us, and they no longer generate belief in our capacity to hand our own sense of manhood on to the next generation." Kriegel notes dryly: "This is not the time to be young, white, and male in America." What is at stake in his claim? How can the social thinker explain the crisis Kriegal observes around him?

Kriegel's insistent exploration of manhood, given his recognition that manhood can no longer sustain men as it once did, is best examined through conceptual analysis. Internal to the life of every culture, helping to structure, animate and sustain it, one finds a cluster of interlocked basic notions, ideas shared, though not shared completely, by social participants. Such notions include images of masculinity and femininity as well as concepts of nature, authority, sex, death, God, family and community. None of these notions are sealed off from the others. This means that a serious challenge to one idea impinges on them all.

There have been epochs in which conceptual challenges were easily repelled and the web of basic notions held firm. There are other epochs (ours is one) in which the web of interconnections loosens and begins to give way. The result is that values, attitudes and ways of acting that were once "normal" may come to appear desperate, pointless—even laughable.

If what is being challenged in our troubled era is not simply the legitimacy of those attributes traditionally labeled "masculine" or "feminine" but the very meanings of *woman* and *man*, then the fundamental delineators of identity are shaken, and a sense of anarchy threatens. "Men today," Kriegel writes, "seem uncomfortable with their manhood, almost as uncomfortable as they seem when they deny it. As we are caught in the crossfire between change and tradition, liberation itself becomes one more demand to measure up to, one more performance to be witnessed by other men, one more tape measure with which to define the boundaries of manhood." How does the American man meet the challenge?

Some men react to the tumult by seeing it as the treachery of a fanatic band of "hostiles." They would draw the wagons into a circle and defend a small perimeter of "basic values" to the death. Others embrace the latest style in social change, whose implications they can neither understand nor specify with coherence. They greet the future with an expansive gesture so dramatic one sometimes fails to notice that they are also throwing in the towel, and crying: I have seen the light and hereby renounce all that is male, masculine, having to do with manhood. From predator to pussycat.

Kriegel will have none of this—neither the drawing of desperate circles nor the indignities of public *mea culpas*. To hold the old line renders the achievement of manhood brittle, and permanently adolescent, verifying in this retreat the claims made against it. To turn oneself into an acolyte of anomie decked out in the garb of an enlightened "life style," to become a mouthpiece for what passes this month for "liberation," "wholeness," "fulfillment" is

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to compromise the moorings of the self, to sell oneself too easily, without a struggle, without the truth which comes from a battle over competing versions of what it means to be a man, a woman, an American, a decent and honorable human being. Kriegel knows that transformations in human identity are arduous and painful and that much may be lost as the "new world" is gained. He attempts to carve out and to defend a most difficult position by accepting as valid and inescapably true many if not all of the grievances and claims of those groups and individuals whom men as a group have too often treated as "other." But he will not pay the price of his identity, his achievement of manhood.

And yet . . . and yet . . . I would not be honest to my identity if I did not express my conviction that much of the struggle, quest, mastery Kriegel insistently subsumes within "man" and "manhood" are human imperatives shared across sexes. Women, too, adopted many of Kriegel's symbolic fathers—Hemingway, Wayne, Brando—and had to deal with the paradox of those identifications for female identity. Women, too, may define themselves through sport, and they would no doubt endorse Kriegel's claim that sport is part of "our need for autonomy, for an existence in which skill conditioned by discipline creates a sense of adventure for both participant and observer." Little girls as well as little boys love baseball: how do they incorporate that love into adult womanhood?

Then there were those few points at which *On Men and Manhood* truly jarred. Although I was moved by Kriegel's description and defense of fatherhood as a central feature of his manhood, the troubling moments came when he—holding me, a sympathetic female reader, at arm's length—tied that fatherhood exclusively to a relationship with sons: "A son remains an insurance policy which measures the reality of his father's own emergence." That seems rather sad. Or, "A child is one's substance, but a son in America is a judge, the barometer of whether or not a man has measured up." More: "And fatherhood. For me, at least, birth embodied the deepest ambiguities of manhood. A man wanted the possibilities of consequences for his own sons." Finally, with a closure that caused me to gasp, Kriegel pronounces, "Most men would choose sons." Sadly, I accepted

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the truth of the blow even as I painfully recalled the studies in which women were asked to give the sex they preferred for their unborn children and it was learned that "most women would choose sons." There is, in this, real pathos, even pity, and several sharp, unformed intimations of terror.

What remains? The hope that our and Kriegel's struggle with defining and redefining the self, achieving secure identities as women, men and Americans, will usher in a future in which "man" and "manhood" are no longer held, by men and women alike, to be preferable to "woman" and "womanhood." This future cannot be some androgynous hallucination in which de-sexed beings would neither need nor make distinctions but a way of life structured and given meaning by basic notions that will not, chillingly, decree the female identity to be a lower achievement, of meaner purpose than the male. □

The Ghost of England Past

RICHARD GILMAN

A bright young Englishwoman who had just come to the United States for the first time told me recently how disappointed she had been that America was so little different from England, until she realized that it was England that had become so much like America. I had observed this myself during the summer, when I was in London for the first time in more than five years. There were coffee bars wherever you turned but one was hard put to find a place to have tea. American movies were everywhere, but there wasn't a single British-made film showing in London during my entire stay. More broadly, whatever influences London was absorbing from us, the city seemed to be losing, beneath the great obvious monuments to its past, a sense of distinctiveness, an autonomous energy and purpose. It seemed seedier than I had ever known it, strangely provincial, small, tight and predictable.

I had always come to London with an intellectual expectancy. I looked forward to the theater, the bookstores, to ideas and wit, high standards for the mind. London set these on its own and also was a place where new European thought and work came sooner than it did to us. A capital of the intellect. It wasn't that I was caught in any traditional mood of American inferiority; I knew perfectly well that ever since the war our culture had been far more energetic than theirs, more original and adventurous. But something about England, about London at least, remained extremely attractive. In this slowly shrinking culture, anchored as it was to a splendid past, there continued to exist clear criteria of intelligence, lucid artifacts of imagination, such as our own turbulent, excessively diverse and "spontaneous" artistic and intellectual life had difficulty locating.

This was especially true of the theater. In America, in New York at any rate, the theater had since the late 1950s been much more robust in certain ways than in England, far more open to experiment, more restless and inventive. There was nothing in England to compare with groups like the Living Theater and the Open Theater; Off and Off Off Broadway had no counterparts in London to their diversity and vigor, and the great European theorists—Brecht, Artaud, Grotowski—had, after a glance at them in London, been taken up here with much greater enthusiasm (for better or worse) than they had by the English. Yet there were several things about the British theater that for years remained enviable to us, that we prized and went to London to encounter.

The most obvious was, of course, the quality of British acting, seemingly so superior to ours, so assured, supple as ours could never be. Another was the presence of companies that weren't really experimental but maintained the art of ensemble playing at a level far beyond what our groups were capable of. And then there had for some years been two or three British playwrights for every one of ours, and the best of them—Pinter, Arden, Edward Bond—were several cuts above our best. What was perhaps most important about these playwrights was that there was nothing provincial, nothing narrowly local about them; to one degree or another their plays were exemplary of the recent, universal imagination of disaster, loss, disjunction.

In films the British had had something to teach us. Until the early 1970s they had produced a number of movies —*Room at the Top*, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning*, *Darling*, *This Sporting Life*, etc.—which, while less complex and resonant than those of the great European film makers of the same period, were still intelligent, clear and much less sentimental and tendentious than most of our own "important" movies of the time. And even in painting and sculpture, where the gap between our vigor and theirs was perhaps greater than in any art except literature, there were still some figures one could greatly admire—Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, Francis Bacon and David Hockney. And then there were the magazines, all those crisp, intelligent journals, from the *Spectator* and the *New Statesman* to *Sight and Sound* and *Theatre Quarterly*, whose American counterparts seemed amateurish by comparison.

Now on my recent visit to London everything struck me as declining, moribund, if that isn't too strong a word. A three-week sojourn may situate you in an untypical period, but always in the past there had been excitements, discoveries, no matter how short a time I'd been there. Now there was almost nothing. To begin with, as I've said, there seem to be no British movies anymore (the result of some hard economics, no doubt), and television, into which a great deal of energy and talent had recently gone that had earlier gone into films, keeps up its technical standards of drama but is everywhere extremely thin, icing without a cake.

In the graphic arts all I saw was a large vacuum filled by American influences to the point of nearly total imitation. A huge show of recent British painting and sculpture at the Heywood Gallery, which is part of the National Theatre complex on the South Bank, seemed to be mostly composed of lesser works by Lichtenstein, Dine, Warhol and Rauschenberg, and the same was true of the recently opened modern British wing at the Tate. (It was there that I had the most satisfying esthetic experience of my trip: in the Turner rooms, especially among those great unfinished mysterious paintings that seem to leap over a century of artistic time.)

The theater, from which one expects most, appeared to me tired, living on its past, on credit, as it were. The new Pinter play at the National Theatre is strained, drab, predictable. Pinter

Richard Gilman will be contributing a monthly column on cultural matters to The Nation.

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feeding on himself. The new Simon Gray play, directed by Pinter, is astonishingly inept, an unaccountable work for the National to put on. Running along with it was a superior *As You Like It*, directed by John Dexter, but judging by the audience and the newspaper reviews, its clean lines and delicate arrangements were greatly disturbing to traditionalists. Elsewhere there were nondescript revivals, American musicals and Tom Stoppard. A theatrical scene that has five of his plays running at the same time can't be in good health.

What underlay everything in the intellectual air of London was, as I said earlier, a strange new provincialism. In the case of the theater a new generation of playwrights has come into prominence, among whom are some talented writers —Barry Keefe, David Edgar, Stephen Poliakoff—but for all their colloquial facility, they remind me of the old joking weather report: fog over the Channel, Continent cut off. Their subjects are narrowly English, parochial in a way even the early Osborne wasn't, and timely in the most brittle sense: rootless London youth, the dead hand of the class system, corruption in high places. Their plays take no dramatic risks, are fretful rather than desperate, and give off a feeling of a culture stewing in its discontents. The better newspapers and the cultural journals send out the same emanations. A kind of incestuous bickering, always a strain of British intellectual life, is more pronounced now than ever.

These are only observations, impressions, in no sense a definitive report. It may be that everything will be reversed by my next visit. But I don't think so. A slide like this seems irreversible, barring some great upheaval which might set the imagination free from the oppressions of a society caught up in its own stifling organizational arrangements. There are no remedies, only recognitions. Seeing London this way was saddening: a source of replenishment dried up, a set of standards bent. When I left I felt like a lover whose loved one had suddenly become old, debilitated, ungiving.

And it struck me when I came back home that there was something odd in the way many of our cultural journals still rely so heavily on British commentators and reviewers or, more broadly, on the British tradition of intellectual argument, peaked and insular as it has become. The British don't rely on us in this realm; very few Americans are asked to review for their magazines, although our learning is at least on the same level as theirs and we are, I think, more in touch with the world of ideas beyond our respective shores than they are. I suppose England, London, Oxbridge and the rest go on functioning in our minds rather like Ibsen's ghosts: values, thought, style from the past, running down but still influential, lodged there as fading models. □

MUSIC

DAVID HAMILTON

Since 1967, seven major European opera companies have visited the United States. The most powerful impression was made by Moscow's Bolshoi, where relative cultural isolation has preserved a distinctive and coherent performing style that is compelling to observe in the works of its rich national tradition. Milan's La Scala provided the only comparable Western experience, with a splendid orchestra and chorus that, under the direction of Claudio Abbado, imbued its performances with a sense of stylistic integrity and musical purpose transcending occasional inequities of solo singing.

Other visitors are better remembered for their repertory. The Hamburg State Opera brought a raft of unfamiliar twentieth-century works, albeit in generally mediocre performances. The Rome Opera did better by Rossini's *Otello* and Verdi's *I due Foscari*, then known only to specialists; both works are now recorded (the Rossini just released, a quite decent performance, on Philips 6769 023, three disks).

More recently, novelties have been eschewed. I didn't hear Berlin's Deutsche Opera in 1975 at the Kennedy Center; they brought *Lohengrin*, *Così fan tutte* and *Tosca*. The next year, the Paris Opera presented *Figaro*, *Otello* (Verdi's this time) and *Faust*, demonstrating that it had now become an "international" theater without any distinctive musical approach, even to the single work from its own national tradition. On the other hand, the Paris stagings of *Otello* and *Faust* were, at the least, sufficiently perverse to remain in the memory.

I'm less certain what memories will survive the Vienna State Opera's visit to Washington this fall. Certainly not unusual repertory: Mozart's *Figaro*, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Strauss's *Salome* and *Ariadne* all turn up regularly at America's opera theaters. Nor was there much distinctively "Viennese" about the two performances I heard (*Fidelio* and *Salome*). The cast of the Beethoven opera was in fact quite different from that of the 1978 Bernstein revival in Vienna (seen on public television and recorded on Deutsche Grammophon 2709 082); only Lucia Popp's delightful Marzellina remained, the only really listenable singing of the evening. Whatever the problems of the 1978 cast and of Bernstein's occasionally sentimental approach to the score, there was then a level of achievement that had vanished entirely in Washington; without impetus or accentual force in the singing and playing, the potentially galvanizing experience of *Fidelio* never came to pass. Otto Schenk's direction was much the same as his staging for the Metropolitan Opera, although Günther Schneider-Siemssen's sets for Vienna are vastly different in affect from Boris Aronson's earthier Met designs.

Zubin Mehta conducted *Salome*, not subtly but at least vigorously. Leonie Rysanek's youthful-looking Judean princess is also familiar to New York audiences; she is still vivid to see, but now hollowness of tone and loss of stamina belie the appearance. Some of the smaller parts were tellingly taken, though not with the consistency in such matters for which Vienna was long famous. Jürgen Rose's designs, in the style of Klimt, were handsome and practical. Connoisseurs of vocal longevity could witness the Herod of Hans Beirer, who admits to having made his debut in 1935; some of the sounds were amazingly strong, the characterization an odd mixture of camp and theatrical canniness.

I didn't hear the *Figaro* or the *Ariadne* (both of them, and the opening *Fidelio*, were broadcast on National Public Radio; the production of the Mozart work was that by Ponnelle, shown a few years ago on public television). They were conducted by Karl Böhm, who also led the Vienna Philharmonic in a concert comprising two Schubert symphonies: the early B-flat and the late C major. "Conduct" isn't the right word; at this point, Böhm mostly presides, and it is a tribute to the orchestra's expertise, ensemble and sense of duty that

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they produce such respectable imitations of performances under these circumstances. Even so, the results are, in large dimensions and small details, eventless (save in the moments when conductorial inattention temporarily increases the potential for disaster). Neither in the Schubert concert nor in a performance of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony under Bernstein in New York did this famous orchestra (which also plays in the pit for the State Opera) consistently measure up to its reputation; uneven wind intonation and brutal kettledrumming were among the more conspicuous deficiencies.

Deficiencies the more conspicuous in Washington because, through some fluke of booking or overbooking, the Böhm concert was followed—on the same night in the same hall—by a concert of the Dresden Staatskapelle under its music director, Herbert Blomstedt. In Beethoven and Brahms symphonies, this fabled orchestra played with a crispness of ensemble and tonal quality that, though altogether individual, never interfered with the generation of adequate warmth. Blomstedt impressed as a technician—not merely the orchestral technician who makes the orchestra play with precision but the musical technician who makes the score *sound* with precision.

For all that (and not to mention the almost literally unmentionable playing of the New York Philharmonic under Zubin Mehta in a pair of Haydn symphonies late in October), the high point of orchestral—and musical—execution I have encountered this fall came at the Metropolitan Opera's gala concert with Birgit Nilsson on November 4. With the pit floor raised to stage level and a makeshift shell before the curtain, the players needed some time to adjust to this first-time-ever acoustical setting, but in excerpts from Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* and Strauss's *Salome*, they produced for James Levine a tonal splendor and transparency, a delicacy and precision, that left behind all other orchestras I've heard this year. This wasn't exactly unexpected, for the Met orchestra plays that well in the pit every night (as was amply audible in the opening-night *Otello* telecast, at least if you listened via the FM simulcast); it would be a benefaction if we could hear them more often in concert (and it might put the Philharmonic on the mettle that apparently eludes the grasp of its current music director).

Autumn brought to New York new productions of two Mozart operas, relatively unfamiliar in the theater. *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* is one of those works in which the glories of the music often overwhelm the thinly stretched plot (and are occasionally, as Mozart himself recognized, irrelevant to dramatic expressivity). Proportions are not well managed: there is too much of the humorously objectionable Osmin at the start of the opera, for example, and little that can be done about him—except by providing, as the Met did, a superb performer in the role: Kurt Moll, a rich bass. The servant-lovers were well handled by Norma Burrowes and Norbert Orth, the principal couple less convincingly, for Nicolai Gedda takes a while to warm up these days, and Edda Moser faced Konstanze's staggeringly difficult music in what appeared to be a state of vocal disarray. (In all the fuss about the Met's revival of this opera, nobody seems to have recalled that it was long in the City Opera repertory, with Beverly Sills a surpassingly fine exponent of Konstanze, a technical and expressive achievement I would rather remember her by than the brave bricks-from-straw exertions forced upon her this season by Menotti's lamentable *La Loca*.) Since the role of the magnanimous Pasha has no music, only dialogue, the performer—in this case, Werner Klemperer—has no easy task in achieving a presence comparable to that of the other, singing characters; this was a problem unsolved by John Dexter's generally straightforward direction. Jocelyn Herbert's pastel sets were marred by an obtrusive Chinese red fence in the second act. Need I add that the orchestral playing, under Levine, was taut, vigorous, vividly articulated and never too loud for the singers?

Clemenza is not a work of the weight and depth of *Idomeneo*, Mozart's earlier and greater *opera seria*; the music is economical, except for a couple of extended showpieces, and mellifluous. It deserves to be part of today's extended repertory, and Federik Mirdita's staging for the City Opera, modeled on a version he did for Vienna, will serve as an introduction. Some numbers are shifted about, and two are omitted, to no serious ill effect but also, I thought, to no great advantage. At least the action is cleanly managed on a spare neoclassical set, with none of the gross irrelevancies and ineptitudes that marred this company's *Idomeneo* production some years ago. The orchestra is still learning the details of the score, but Julius Rudel keeps a firm hand on what should develop into a respectable performance; Charles Russo's playing of the important clarinet and basset-horn obbligatos is already more than that. The vocal writing is often difficult, and the City Opera singers (I saw a "second cast" on November 6) were sometimes overparted—not so, however, Mimi Lerner, a fervent and skilled mezzo-soprano who made an impressive debut as Sesto. □

FILMS

ROBERT HATCH

The publicity wind machines blew up quite a storm for the December 1 New York opening of Claude Lelouch's *Robert et Robert*. It was the first entry in the annual competition to see which theater can induce the longest line of Christmas holiday customers to stand shivering behind the velvet-roped stanchions, waiting for the next showing. Lelouch's film should do well; it is a wry comedy, a mode at which the French excel, and Jacques Villeret and Charles Denner, the two Roberts, are accomplished clowns. But if you join the queue all agog from the advance raves, you may feel let down before the show is over. *Robert et Robert* is not that remarkable.

The "machine" that propels it is a computerized matrimonial agency, with subsidiary lonely-hearts balls and "singles" weekends, a world of loneliness that Lelouch seems to find intrinsically risible, but the very thought of which depresses me. And in any case the scornful humor to be derived from it has, I think, been just about exhausted. The long passages documenting the machinations of a supremely cynical marriage broker (Jean-Claude Brialy) had me squinting at my watch, though it must be said that Lelouch has given the situation a reviving twist—his Roberts, formidably unpromising clients for even the most ingenious of matchmakers, strike up a friendship in the course of the hideously jolly get-togethers that somewhat dispels the cloud of misery surrounding each of them. Leaning on each other, they buck the odds of their insufficiencies. It is touching and at the same time funny, and

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Villeret and Denner work it with style.

Villeret is an apprentice policeman, a fat young man so indecisive of gesture that his appearance on traffic duty guarantees smashed fenders. His lips scarcely move as he whispers his ambitions to the exasperated matrimonial expert; only his eyes betray at times that there is a mind at work behind the weight of flesh. Denner, by contrast, bristles with contention. He drives a cab, subjecting his unlucky passengers to rapid-fire pronouncements supported by no evidence, but designed to make plain that he is a man not to be trifled with. His social manner consists of excessively abrupt responses to misconstrued advances. In short, he is a sheep in wolf's clothing.

They stubbornly hang out together, these two, in the weeks while Brialy strains the resources of his computer and his cunning to find them mates. Indeed, they are so inseparable that the acerb mother of the neophyte *flic*, played by Regine, begins to suspect the worst. However, the Roberts are not gay in the new sense of that word, and certainly not in the old one—until at the end, during a banquet to honor a couple who do find each other in Brialy's bank of awkward romantics, Villeret and Denner boost each other into the sunshine of popularity. The excellent thing about the film, and what goes some way to justify the hullabaloo, is that the two Roberts turn defeat into victory without making any essential changes in their characters. They merely apply them in different contexts.

As a variation on the defection to the United States of Russian ballet celebrities, I could wish that the entire male chorus of the Ballet Company of Riga might decide that their artistic futures would be brighter here among us. These strong, masculine, splendidly trained young men are one of the satisfactions of the filmed performance of Aram Khachaturian's *Gayané*, now being shown in this country.

Indeed, the whole production is a pleasure. I don't set up to judge the fine points of ballet, but to my eyes the Riga company maintains a very high standard: I would doubt that any secondary city in America has a group to match it. There may be no world-class performers in *Gayané* but all the principals dance with authority and grace, and their sense of drama communicates this romantic tale of lovers star-crossed by a peasant revolt in the Caucasus with admirable clarity. The choreography (by Boris Eifman) does not call for extraordinary feats but it does demand sustained excellence of technique and the company supplies it with disciplined ease.

To be sure, the set may seem to Western eyes gloomily assertive and the costumes less attractive than these handsome men and women deserve. But the performers move with spirit and, when required, with convincing passion. The picture was made by an American production team at what seems to be an actual performance (one sees the audience, hears the applause), and the camera, for the most part, views the stage straight on and from a distance sufficient to take in the whole scene. It is a little monotonous, perhaps, but on balance probably the best way to film a theater performance. You are not coerced by the camera to concentrate on this or that detail, and there were moments when I had the illusion of being present in the opera house. However, the camera has a zoom lens, with which at critical moments it pounces on the action. The effect is somewhat disorienting and, since the Russian style encourages a pantomime more exuberant than we find comfortable, some of the close-up encounters verge on bombast. Those gestures and grimaces were keyed to carry into a very large house, so watching them at a seeming distance of a few feet is unfair to the performers. On the other hand, the nuptial pas de deux of Alexander Rumyantsev and Larisa Tulsova is the most affecting lovemaking I have seen on the ballet stage. The choreography is explicit but restrained, and the couple convey the idea that they are transported by their discovery of each other. It is the high point of a consistently fine performance. □

INDIGENOUS MUSIC

NAT HENTOFF

The young clockmaker from Bilgoraj, Poland, was forced to watch as his wife was taken into the crematorium and as his 3-year-old son was smashed, headfirst, against a wall. He begged the foreman of the crematorium at Treblinka to let him stay the night watching over his son's body. Maybe, if his will were strong enough, he could sing life back into the child. The song, "Lullaby for My Little Son in the Crematorium," was not heard again until the clockmaker was moved to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, north of Berlin. There he became friendly with another Polish inmate, a singer and guitarist, and sang the lullaby for him. The clockmaker's last stop was Auschwitz, but the song survives because that singer-guitarist, Aleksander Kulisiewicz, includes it in his concert programs and in his new Folkways album, *Songs from the Depths of Hell.*

This is the first recording by Kulisiewicz to be issued in the United States, although eight previous sets have been released in Europe. He lives in Krakow, but he brings these melodies of the murdered to sizable audiences in Eastern and Western Europe and Japan. His own stay in hell was from 1939 to 1945, and there he took part in many hidden poetry readings and exchanges of songs. Peter Wortsman, who assembled this album and made the translations from the Polish, notes that S.S. doctors tried several times, by way of a "scientific" experiment, to destroy Kulisiewicz's voice through injections of diptheria bacilli. But each time, "comrades managed to smuggle in the antidote. Finally the doctors gave up. 'Let the dog sing,' they laughed."

It is a soft, supple voice, and Kulisiewicz makes it extraordinarily expressive through his finely shaded command of dynamics. At times, its essential gentleness breaks into bitter, caustic rage—and a grief that is all the more haunting for being without tears. He is also what might be called a narrative guitarist for he uses the instrument as a complementary and sometimes sardonic second voice. The guitar was lifted from a Jewish musician by an S.S. guard who quite accurately told the Jew that where he was going, he wouldn't need his instrument. Later, as Allied soldiers approached the camp, the guard panicked and shoved the guitar into Kulisiewicz's arms. Who knew what might be used as evidence?

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The songs are all from within various death camps. The clockmaker's: "How can I cast you into the flames/With your shining golden hair?" The last musical words of a 17-year-old Russian on the night before he was incinerated: "Smoke, smoke . . . let the smoke/Choke the German dogs." Another prisoner wrote down the Russian text on scraps of paper bags and gave them to Kulisiewicz, who added the song to his repertory of ghost themes that he will not let be forgotten. His intent, by the way, is to show, of all things, hope. So many spirits, he says, were not broken, even in hell. "To believe in love in a concentration camp, that was not easy," he notes. "But we had to believe." And so, Kulisiewicz carries these songs with him in order to "sing to those few—especially the youth—who want a better world."

From the Lemberg extermination camp in eastern Poland, a song for today's young to conjure with is "The Deathtango." S.S. Lieut. Stephan Rokita used to amuse himself by having a renowned violinist among the prisoners play this popular hit of the time for Jews waiting in line to be tapped for extinction. Some of the Jews put different words to the tango. All those lyricists are gone, but Kulisiewicz still sings: "Bloody notes of sweet string music/Hear it, how your heartbeat fades away? . . . And if death grabs for your hand/Just be ready, death's a friend."

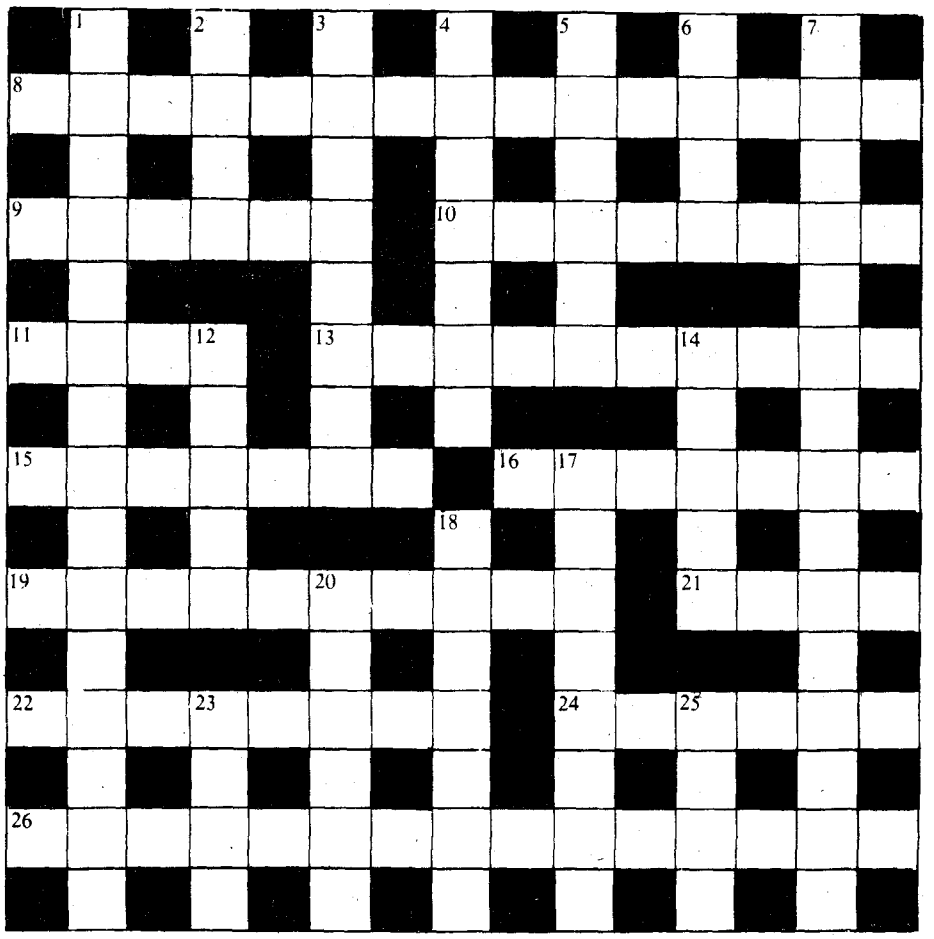
On the other hand, there was also a fierce repulsion of death, as in a collective attempt by Sachsenhausen prisoners in late 1944 to write an international concentration camp hymn. Many camps were included in the vocal drum roll to show the vastness of the S.S.'s network of death, but the mood was defiant: "Treblinka, Auschwitz, Gusen!/Hearts held high, and high the fist!/Barbed wire death the coward chooses/Live! Now live, death is no rest."

Two years before, a male nurse at the same camp—Polish poet and journalist Leonard Krasnodebski—wrote the text of "Choral from the Depths of Hell." In 1943, the S.S. forced him to commit suicide because he knew too much about Nazi "medical" experiments. Kulisiewicz put his words to music: "Choral! Choral! Song from Hell/Keep our killers from ever sleeping well."

Aleksander Kulisiewicz, who disturbs the sleep of all who hear him, is not, by the way, Jewish. □

Crossword Puzzle No. 1801

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

8 With bars of silver, one is about ready for company. (5,10)
9 Talking of this, one might expect it to be free. (6)
10 It might involve a 9 with your uncle, for instance—a trial one, in a way. (8)
11 It could entitle you to come in and see what is thrown on the field. (4)
13 Hotcakes, supposedly—or a novel version. (4,6)
15 Relaxation of such as 10 which are strained, being somewhat of a catch with the Eastern capital. (7)
16 In the mile, ran badly, but still good enough for the gold or silver, perhaps. (7)
19 Deviations from the normal with one who calls out names for a piece of paper. (6,4)
21 Yours and mine could be the Gallic rather than the Russian bear. (4)
22 Increasing symbol of faith, to some. (8)
24 The score reached by four basketball teams on the floor? (6)
26 Not equivalent to lese-majesty, though looking down on kings and queens, by the sound of it, might have fine consequences. (8,2,5)

DOWN

1 One's job hasn't necessarily been taken by another—one is probably only looking for refuge. (9,6)
2 Man, for example, is superior to the French. (4)
3 A lot of letters for a sacred runner, with a wager placed on it. (8)
4 Did they colonize one with it, at one time? (The spy role is evident.) (7)
5 Distinctive forms of old writing instruments. (6)
6 Not by the sound of it the tie that binds. (4)
7 This might be filled out by early spring, though one of its forms is short. (6,3,6)
12 Animal guide. (5)
14 Head to windward if you do, and tell someone stories. (3,2)
17 Associate closely, yet I find trouble with it. (8)
18 Able to say good-by at an early age with a short choral work. (7)
20 Gets hot, in a sense, as Mets, perhaps. (6)
23 Sound vision in place of it? (4)
25 If he shoots at you does it hurt getting up? (4)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 1800

ACROSS: 1 Break into song; 9 Istle; 10 Goldfinch; 11 Gunboat; 12 Iceberg; 13 Proof; 14 Belatedly; 16 Hit-or-miss; 18 Shako; 19 Revived; 21 Heights; 22 All in vain; 23 Largo; 24 The Devil to pay. DOWN: 1 Bring up the rear; 2 Eating out; 3 Keep off; 4 Night; 5 Oil fields; 6 Off-beat; 7 Genre; 8 Shaggy-dog story; 14 Blind date; 15 Death trap; 17 Revenge; 18 Skillet; 20 Valet; 21 Hanoi.

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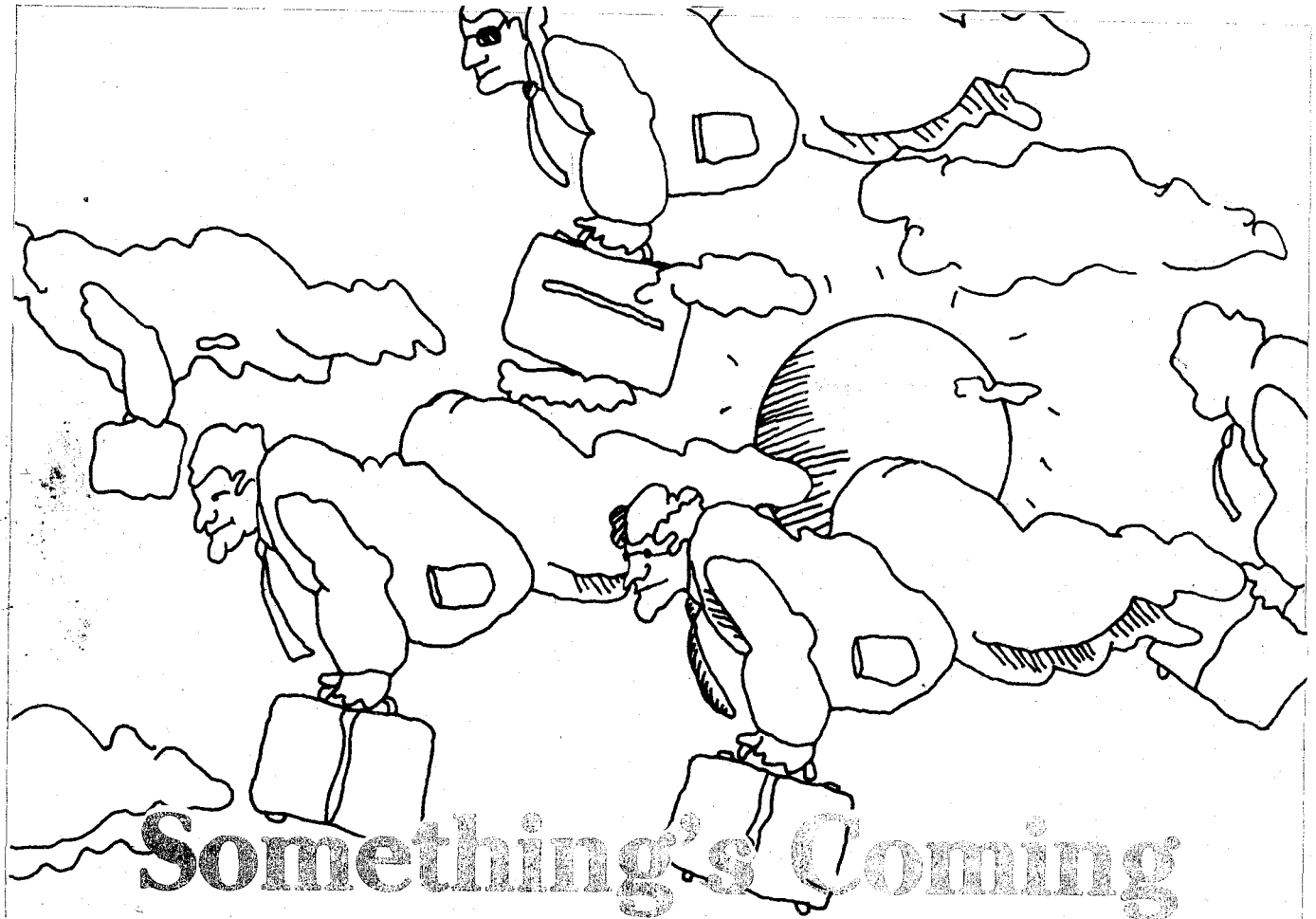

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